

THE
HISTORY OF THE CHURCH,

In Verse.

DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF
BIBLE-CLASSES, SCHOOLS, AND FAMILIES.

OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

in the United States.

BY
JOHN HENRY HOPKINS, D.D., LL.D.,

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF VERMONT.

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THE
HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

INTRODUCTION.

THE youth of either sex, whose ardent mind
Its care on education would bestow,
Must in the page of History seek to find
The course of all things in our world below :

The rise of powerful nations, — how they sprung
From small beginnings to their destined height ;
The poets who their dawning glory sung ;
Their forms of government, and deeds of might ;

Their systems of philosophy ; their arts ;
Their men of learning, and their men of skill ;
Their sages, warriors, kings, who played their
parts
With lofty aim and energetic will.

But, in this History, certain topics claim
Especial interest. All the nations known
Cherished some form in which religious flame,
With more or less of active influence, shone.

The demon-gods adored on Grecian plains,
Embalmed so well in Homer's magic lay,
Still live in history, though their idol fanes
Have, for so many ages, passed away.

The same false deities appear again
When ancient Rome's proud annals we review;
And classic learning would be sought in vain,
Unless this knowledge be accepted too.

And shall the scholars of our Christian land,
In which the only true religion reigns,
Neglect to take its history in their hand,
Though that alone their future hope sustains?

Is it not shameful that those heathen lays
Should in the memory of youth be stored,
While Christian history attracts no praise, —
The false well studied, and the true ignored?

Yet have I seen full many a learned man,
Whose pagan knowledge all superior shone,
Quite ignorant of the course the Gospel ran;
Nor did he blush his ignorance to own.

With humble hope some little aid to bring
To remedy this evil of our time,
I give my reader here a novel thing, —
A History of the Church, composed in rhyme.

The form, I trust, its use will recommend,
Although it wears an unaccustomed dress :
The verse some small attractiveness may lend,
And help the memory better to impress.

To high poetic power I lay no claim,
Nor would my subject favor its display :
To write a useful book was all my aim ;
How far successful, 'tis not mine to say.

But I can promise that the leading facts,
From the beginning, shall with truth appear,
In just accordance with the words and acts
Of Him whose worship claims our love and fear,

The great Redeemer : Whose celestial might
Restrains the nations by its strong control ;
Whose doctrine leads us to the realm of light,
And gives true glory to the faithful soul.

His Church is heaven's own kingdom upon earth ;
No subject with its history can compare :
With the first man it had its gracious birth,
And the last man must find his safety there !

The world's proud empires all shall fade away ;
The Church alone from ruin is secure !
The world's best treasures in the grave decay ;
The Church shall to eternity endure !

Then let the Church's history have its place —
An honored place — with every thinking man,
That so his mind may better learn to trace
The wondrous mercy of Redemption's plan.

'Tis true, my simple verse may often seem
Too weak its noble subject to sustain ;
But, to do justice to so high a theme,
An angel's talents might aspire in vain.

I ask indulgence for an old man's zeal,
Whose life is hastening to the closing hour,
Claiming no merit, though his heart may feel
The wish to do the little in his power.

That little at the Saviour's feet I lay ;
And may His grace the humble gift approve,
When He shall come, at the appointed day,
To rule His Church in heavenly light and love !



HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

P A R T I.

CANTO I.

1.

You know, dear Reader, that the Word,
Revealed by our Almighty Lord
In Holy Scripture, gives us all
That we can truly knowledge call
Of things removed from mortal sight or sense:
To go beyond it is a vain pretence.

2.

In the beginning there, it shows
How all by God's commandment rose:
The fruitful plain, the mountains high,
The sun and moon, the starry sky,
The seas, the rivers, every plant and tree,
Birds, beasts, and fish, were formed by His de-
cree.

3.

Five days were thus in wonders passed ;
Then came the greatest and the last :
For God created Adam's frame
Out of the dust ; the purer flame
Of soul was breathed into the human shrine,
And formed an image of the Power divine !

4.

The seventh day was a solemn rest :
Creation's work was done and blessed.
But soon a want was well supplied,
And Eve was formed from Adam's side ;
For God designed it to be clearly shown,
That 'twas not good for man to be alone.

5.

And now, to prove the happy pair,
The Lord prepared a garden fair,
Where trees of fruit delicious grew,
And odorous flowers of brightest hue ;
But in the midst another tree was placed,
Which His command forbade them both to taste.

6.

This tree of knowledge, good and ill,
If eaten with rebellious will,
Should bring upon their broken faith
The awful penalty of death !
Thus God forewarned them of the fatal spell ;
And, for a while, they kept his law full well.

7.

But it appears that, ere the birth
Of all those wonders upon earth,
Some of the angels sinned in heaven,
And from their place of light were driven
Down to the hell of chaos dark and drear;
To devils changed, by envy, hate, and fear.

8.

Their chief and leader bore the name
Of Satan : he to Eden came,
And in the serpent's form assailed
The faith of Eve, who then prevailed
On Adam, till, alas! the fatal tree
Was plucked by both, in spite of God's decree !

9.

O 'twas a dreadful sin to prove
Ungrateful to His marvellous love
Who had created them, and given
A paradise to be their heaven ;
Where all around was beauty, peace and joy,
Without one care to trouble or annoy !

10.

A dreadful sin, to take the word
Of Satan, and despise the Lord !
Against His precept to rebel,
And trust the treacherous prince of hell !
With God's almighty arm to dare the strife,
And thus defy the Power that gave them life !

11.

The awful sentence came with all
Its sad infliction on the fall :
The youthful world was stained by sin,
And Death should thence his work begin !
Expelled from Eden, Adam now must toil ;
While thorns and thistles should deform the soil.

12.

Next on the Tempter came the word
Of condemnation from the Lord :
The serpent's movement, base and low,
Should force him on his breast to go ;
And Eve's great Son should bruise his head, yet
feel
The enmity of Satan in His heel.

13.

Before the close of that sad day,
The guilty pair were driven away
From Eden's bowers ; but, ere they went,
The Lord, with gracious, kind intent,
The fig-leaves took, with which they hid their
shame,
And gave them coats of skins to clothe their
frame.

14.

This was the time, as 'tis maintained,
When sacrifices were ordained.
The lambs from which the skins were ta'en,
By God's command, were duly slain ;

And Adam learned, in that, to see the sign
Of Christ's great Sacrifice by law divine.

15.

Here we behold the faith begun.
The woman's Seed, the promised Son,
Was the Redeemer: dimly known,
But in due season to be shown,
The world's sole Hope and Refuge given to prove,
In all the saving mercy of His love!

16.

With this the Church begins her strife ;
For faith in Christ is still her life.
Adam, before he sinned, could plead
That *justice* answered all his need ;
But now on *mercy* only he could call
To raise him from the terrors of the fall!

CANTO II.

1.

EXPULSED from paradise, the toil
Of man commenced upon the soil :
No more the tree of life he knew ;
No luscious fruits around him grew ;
But the wild grain in fair abundance stood,
And that was gathered for his daily food.

2.

In little time, the race began
 To multiply. The first-born man
 Was Cain; and soon his brother came, —
 Abel, a bright and honored name, —
 Followed by sons and daughters, till around
 A host appeared to cultivate the ground.

3.

The age allotted then appears
 To reach almost a thousand years;
 And hence 'tis plain the useful arts
 Would soon assume their various parts;
 For each discoverer's course might onward run
 Through centuries, to complete what he'd begun.

4.

The Scriptures next our notice call
 To the sad workings of the fall:
 A brother's murder shows too well
 The force of passions, dark and fell,
 Which lurk in all our natures since that hour,
 Though not brought out save by temptation's
 power.

5.

The rite of sacrifice was given
 To be a sacrament of heaven;
 The sign of the believer's faith
 In Him who conquers woe and death,
 Decreed to come at the appointed day, —
 The Lamb of God, who takes our sins away.

6.

Hence 'twas by sacrifice alone
The humble sinner's faith was shown ;
And every man of age mature
Was bound to make the promise sure,
On Sabbath days his altar to prepare,
And offer up his lamb with praise and prayer.

7.

Now Cain with scornful pride despised
The truth which faithful Abel prized.
He took his offering from the ground ;
And soon, with high resentment, found
That God would not accept it ; while from heaven
The sign of grace to Abel's faith was given.

8.

But though the Lord vouchsafed this sign,
It had no influence to incline
The heart of Cain. With angry wrath,
He took his sullen, vengeful path ;
And, as together in the field they stood,
With murderous hand he shed his brother's
blood !

9.

Called to a strict and stern account,
He does but add to the amount
Of his atrocious, dreadful sin
By a bold lie, his crime to screen ;
But he's condemned in banishment to mourn,
And marked, lest others shed his blood in turn.

10.

From this we might full well relate
The patriarchal Church's state.
Like pious Abel, some believed;
Others, like Cain, were self-deceived;
While sacrifice was the established road
For all who trusted in the word of God.

11.

Brief is the Scripture list which lies
Before the thoughtful reader's eyes,
Of those who held a filial claim
To the great patriarch Adam's name;
But Seth is mentioned as a favorite son,
Born after faithful Abel's course was run.

12.

And then we see the Book record
That men "began upon the Lord
To call;" from which we may conclude
That now the faithful thought it good
To form some public union, to the end
That they might better against sin contend.

13.

For next "the sons of God" we find,
As by a special name designed
To mark the character impressed
Upon the Church above the rest:
"Daughters of men," in contrast, here we view;
And this would seem to make our inference true.

14.

Seduced by these, the sons of God
The path of sad temptation trod.
Cain and his bold associates reared
The first great city; then appeared
A large advancement in the various arts,
And men to wealth and pleasure gave their
hearts.

15.

But one great patriarch, strong in faith,
Translated, without seeing death,
Was Enoch, who had still maintained
His walk with God, and so had gained
The power to hold with sin a constant strife,
And keep a holy purity through life.

16.

Yet guilt increased with rapid stride,
And men the truth of Heaven denied;
The Church grew less and less, till none
Were left but Noah's house alone:
Then God pronounced the world's tremendous
doom, —
Another century, and the Flood should come!

17.

Now, to preserve a faithful seed,
And to provide for Noah's need,
The Lord commanded him to mark
His strict directions for an Ark
Of vast extent, made of the gopher-tree,
Where he and his might still in safety be.

18.

One hundred twenty years were given,
In warning, by command of Heaven ;
And Noah preached and prophesied,
While men the threatened doom defied :
They laughed at words so gloomy and so sad, —
The Ark was folly, and its builder mad !

19.

At length, on the appointed day,
A year's supplies were stowed away ;
And birds and beasts and reptiles came
Within the Ark's capacious frame :
The wild appeared by two, the tame by seven,
As God's supreme commandment had been given.

20.

Then Noah and his sons, with all
Their wives, obeyed the heavenly call :
Eight souls were in that Ark contained, —
The whole that of the Church remained ;
And, when they were securely housed within,
The hand of the Almighty shut them in.

21.

A curious multitude around
Had gathered : far and wide renowned
The prophet's word and work had been ;
And as they gazed upon the scene,
And saw the birds and beasts his call obey,
They thought it strange, and jesting went their
way.

22.

But, hark! a peal of thunder rends
The sky; the rain in sheets descends;
Crash after crash,—the deafening roar
Is heard at once on every shore!
The heavens one moment blaze with scathing
light;
The next, they're shrouded in the pall of night!

23.

The fountains of the deep profound
Burst forth, as with an earthquake's sound;
The central fires, by God's decree,
Heave up the bottom of the sea;
The splendid cities sink, in ruin hurled;
And awful tempests rage throughout the world!

24.

Through forty nights and forty days
The storm its furious might displays:
Down, down from heaven the torrents pour!
On, on, wild waves the land devour!
Higher, and higher still, the Flood ascends,
Till one vast ocean o'er the globe extends!

25.

O how the impious race of men
Struggled for life! but all in vain.
While o'er their necks the waters swell,
How did they rave and shriek and yell,

And envy Noah's lot, and curse the day
When they refused to listen and obey!

26.

But o'er the dark, tempestuous tides
The noble Ark in safety rides.
No fear is there of judgment's rod;
For it contains the Church of God:
His hand will guard it till the peril's past,
And bring it to its resting-place at last!

27.

And so it was, that when the Lord
Fulfilled the threatening of His Word,
And all had perished, save the few
Designed to stock the earth anew,
The deluge ceased; the sun beamed forth on
high;
And, in due time, the ground again was dry.

28.

One year had passed, upon the day
When Noah left the Ark to stay
On Ararat's high mount, and then
Descended on the fruitful plain,
With all his precious company of seven,
Beasts, birds, and reptiles, by command of
Heaven.

29.

And here his piety we see
In the first act when thus set free:

His great deliverance to record,
He built an altar to the Lord;
Offered his sacrifice, with hands outspread;
And God pronounced a blessing on his head.

CANTO III.

1.

NOAH his new career began
Upon the patriarchal plan, —
A chosen saint, to whom was given
The word revealed direct from Heaven;
A preacher and a prophet, skilled to join
The power of earthly rule with faith divine.

2.

His sons — Shem, Ham, and Japhet — saw
How God could vindicate His law
In that tremendous Flood which hurled
To ruin a rebellious world;
And, while they lived, the Church might safely keep
The faith thus rescued from the stormy deep.

3.

Hence, as the race, on every side,
From Noah's stock the earth supplied,
The truth went with them; in each land
The patriarch's doctrine took its stand;
And some strong traces of it yet remain,
Even where the heathen idols hold their reign.

4.

And so, some centuries from the Flood,
The Church continued sound and good ;
And all mankind agreed to teach
One faith, one worship, and one speech ;
Until, through Satan's fraud, in evil hour,
It was resolved to build old Babel's tower.

5.

That wild design, as it should seem,
Grew from an impious, daring scheme
To have some sure abiding home
If e'er another Flood should come ;
And thus it was a monument of pride,
Which God's almighty word and power defied.

6.

But vain the work of human hand
'Gainst His resistless will to stand !
Their language was confounded there !
Their hosts were scattered in despair,
No longer able to unite their art,
And forced, by different tongues, to live apart.

7.

The subtle scheme of Satan's guile
Was thus defeated for a while ;
For now no portion of mankind
To rule the rest the means could find :
Wrapped in itself, no nation's proud control
Could hope to govern and corrupt the whole.

8.

Another change produced we see,
Which modified man's destiny.
Though once to near a thousand years
His life on earth stretched out appears,
Yet now the Lord cut short his former span,
And Death arrested high Ambition's plan.

9.

But Satan still, with subtle art,
Contrived to lead the human heart :
Mankind no longer dared defy
The awful power of the Most High ;
And so the subtle Enemy brought in
A different yet a no less fatal sin.

10.

To superstition he inclined
The weakness of the common mind.
The sun and moon were first adored
As symbols of the living Lord ;
And then the powers of Nature, false and true,
Were all personified, and worshipped too.

11.

Next, the dead hero and the sage
Began their homage to engage :
And here the fallen angels strove
To reap the fruits of faith and love ;
Erected statues to some mortal's name,
And for themselves secured the idol's fame.

12.

The course of Superstition's sway
 Was thus advancing day by day,
 When God, in mercy, gave a call
 To Abram, to abandon all
 His friends and kindred in his native place,
 And be the father of a chosen race.

13.

Obedient to his Lord's command,
 The patriarch came to Canaan's land ;
 And there he led a pastoral life,
 Preserved from hostile fear and strife :
 The path of genuine faith with zeal he trod,
 And had the constant favor of his God.

14.

A prince in wealth and power was he,
 And yet from pride and passion free,
 Devoted to the will of Heaven :
 To him the covenant was given,
 That Canaan by his race should be possessed,
 And all mankind should in his Seed be blessed.

15.

With Abram, then, the Church began
 A new career, upon a plan
 Which future ages should revere
 In fervent love and holy fear ;
 And hence, that men the power of faith might feel,
 The Lord gave circumcision as its seal.

16.

And now, to mark the patriarch's claim,
A change was passed upon his name.
Father of nations he must be ;
For such was the divine decree :
And, by the term of *Abraham*, his place
Should be confessed by every future race.

17.

The name of Sarai, whom through life
The patriarch honored as his wife,
Was changed to Sarah, that her share
In his high honor she might bear ;
And Isaac soon, their promised son, was given,
In their old age, by special grace of Heaven.

18.

Some years passed o'er, when Abraham's faith
Received a trial worse than death :
For God commanded him take
His son, a sacrifice to make ;
Upon the altar Isaac's head to lay,
And there, with his own hand, the youth to slay !

19.

The patriarch rose his task to prove,
In spite of his paternal love.
The Lord's design he could not see ;
'Twas wrapped in deepest mystery :
But he would walk by faith, and not by sight ;
For God's command must still be just and right.

20.

Three days he journeyed, till he came
 To Mount Moriah, — 'twas the same
 On which, in after-ages, stood
 The Saviour's Cross, all stained with blood !
 For this was the appointed spot, and there
 He was enjoined his offering to prepare.

21.

The wood was all in order laid ;
 For strength and grace with zeal he prayed ;
 To Isaac one embrace was given ;
 And then he heard the will of Heaven :
 Trained to obedience by his father's faith,
 The youth consented, and prepared for death.

22.

And now the sacrificial knife
 Was raised to take his precious life ;
 When, lo ! the voice of God, aloud,
 Calls, " Abraham, Abraham ! " from the cloud :
 " Lord, here I am ! " the patriarch humbly said,
 And, with new hope inspired, lifts up his head !

23.

The Voice went on to give command :
 " Lay not upon the youth thy hand ;
 Thy perfect faith is proved full well,
 And all mankind its power shall tell ;
 Blessings on blessings shall attend thee still,
 And thy posterity the earth shall fill ! "

24.

In this sublime event, we trace
The mercy destined for our race :
For God the Father deigns to give
His Son to die, that we might live ;
And Isaac is a type of Christ, who lay
On Calvary's cross to take our sins away.

CANTO IV.

1.

THE pious Abraham could not bear
To see his cherished son and heir
Select the partner of his life
From Canaan's daughters : hence the wife
Of Isaac from a purer lineage came,
With faith and prayer. Rebecca was her name.

2.

No taste or fancy here took part,
Nor was there place for courtship's art :
The whole with care arranged had been
Before each other's face was seen.
Yet constant love their happy union sped,
For God His blessing on their hearts had shed.

3.

And thus their marriage still was deemed
A model, revered and esteemed ;
And, even to the present day,
For every wedded pair we pray,
That they, with faithful love in each true breast,
Like Isaac and Rebecca may be blessed.

4.

Jacob, their younger, chosen son,
With whom great Israel's name begun,
Deceived, two sisters took to wife, —
Sad source of jealousies and strife ;
And to his offspring the Twelve Tribes could trace
The famed divisions of their favored race.

5.

Of faithful temper, just and mild,
Young Joseph was his favorite child ;
Ordained a type of Christ to be,
In suffering love and purity :
Into a pit by his own brethren cast,
And yet their Saviour and their friend at last.

6.

For he, when raised to high command,
In Egypt's rich and prosperous land,
While famine, sent by Heaven, was found
In Canaan and the countries round,
Caused all his father's house with joy to come,
And in the fruitful Goshen fixed their home.

7.

There they remained until they died.
Their children grew and multiplied;
And, in the course of centuries three,
A mighty host they came to be :
But then a king of Pharaoh's line arose,
Who doomed them to a course of bitter woes.

8.

He forced them still like slaves to toil
In hardest labors on the soil, —
In making brick, and building all
For which his lordly pride might call ;
And next he gave commandment to destroy,
Even in the hour of birth, each Hebrew boy !

9.

Hard for the body such control,
And yet more dangerous to the soul !
For Satan, with his idol train,
Had spread his foul, debasing reign
Throughout the earth, and Egypt owned his sway ;
And Israel's faith was sinking fast away !

10.

But still they honored Abraham's name,
And knew the stock from whence they came ;
And still they worshipped and adored
The only true Almighty Lord :
Hence, when in cruel bondage forced to sigh,
They lifted up to God their suppliant cry.

11.

And He in mercy heard their prayer,
And sent a great deliverer there,—
Moses, who had in youth acquired
Old Egypt's learning, so admired;
Brought up in Pharaoh's court with princely art,
And yet a faithful Israelite in heart.

12.

For now the promised time had come
When Canaan should be Israel's home :
Its flagrant wickedness the cup
Of righteous judgment had filled up;
And Egypt's idols, too, must be o'erthrown;
While God's great power should through the
world be known.

13.

Such was the grand and glorious plan
On which the Lord's new work began :
Upheld by His Almighty hand,
Moses should issue his command,
And Pharaoh should be hardened to rebel,
That so mankind might mark the contest well.

14.

Armed with a slender shepherd's rod,
Behold ! the lowly man of God,
With faithful Aaron at his side,
Stands forth before the monarch's pride,
And, in the Lord of Israel's mighty name,
Their right to worship straight proceeds to claim.

15.

The king refuses. Wonders rise
Before his unbelieving eyes;
Stupendous miracles are wrought,
Surpassing every human thought!
The idol priesthood in submission yield;
And Satan, wholly vanquished, quits the field!

16.

But still the Lord makes hard the heart
Of Pharaoh. Israel cannot yet depart,
Until the great Jehovah's might
Has fixed the wondering nation's sight;
And all the kingdoms round, both far and near,
Are forced His power and majesty to fear.

17.

At length, the promised hour drew nigh:
The Paschal Lamb was now to die.
Its blood, upon the door-post cast
Ere the destroying angel passed,
Should guard the Israelites, at Moses' word,
While Egypt's first-born fell beneath his sword.

18.

A type of Christ's great sacrifice
This Jewish Passover supplies;
And hence 'twas kept, a yearly feast,—
Each father acting as the priest,—
In constant memory of the Lord's decree,
Which burst His people's bonds, and set them free.

19.

Forewarned by Moses, in the night
Israel stood ready for their flight;
For, when the angel's deadly brand
Struck down the first-born through the land,
The king, in terror, could not brook delay,
But ordered them to go, before the day.

20.

Nor went they empty. Roused by fear,
Their old oppressors now appear
Eager to give what they desired;
And vast the treasure they acquired.
For Egypt they had spent long years of toil,
And God commanded them to take the spoil.

21.

We read that Israel numbered then
Six hundred thousand able men
Fit to bear arms; yet not a word
Of insurrection had been heard:
By Pharaoh's self their liberty was given,
Constrained by the controlling power of Heaven.

22.

Some hours before the rising sun,
The mighty host their march begun:
God, by a fiery pillar, showed
To Moses their appointed road;
And when they travelled in the heat of day,
That pillar, changed to cloud, still led the way.

23.

But Egypt's judgments were not past :
The most destructive was the last.
For Pharaoh, in his impious pride,
Again his plighted faith denied,
Collected all his army, and the path
Of Israel followed, with revengeful wrath.

24.

And now the host of God was seen,
In sad perplexity, between
The surges of the dark Red Sea
And Pharaoh's veteran soldiery !
Moses lay prostrate in the act of prayer ;
And all around was terror and despair.

25.

Then, strengthened by the Lord's command,
He raised the rod in his right hand,
And, lo ! a mighty east wind blew ;
And straight the billows back withdrew,
Opening amidst the waves a wondrous road,
To prove the power and mercy of their God.

26.

Through walls of water, piled on high,
The host went on, with footsteps dry :
Led by the fiery pillar's light,
They travelled safely all the night ;
While darkness baffled Pharaoh's tyrant will,
And kept his army far from Israel still.

27.

At length, the people had passed o'er
Their marvellous pathway to the shore :
But the Egyptians, when too late,
Perceived their just though awful fate ;
For they had followed at their monarch's word,
Doomed to endure the vengeance of the Lord !

28.

The rod, raised up o'er Moses' head,
Restored the waters to their bed :
Down came the waves with thundering sound,
While shrieks of terror yelled around !
The raging billows swallowed all the host,
And in the deep abyss the whole were lost !

29.

O with what transport and amaze
Did Israel lift the hymn of praise ! —
“Sing to the Lord, whose glorious arm
Protects His chosen still from harm :
His is the triumph, by whose high decree
Our foes lie weltering in the dark Red Sea !”

CANTO V.

1.

FOUR hundred twenty years had passed
Since Jacob's sons their lot had cast
On Egypt's soil, until the day
When God vouchsafed to lead their way
From bondage, to assume their destined place
As the Queen nation of the human race.

2.

But, ere that rank they could attain,
A system, pure from heathen stain,
Must be established by the word
And mighty power of Israel's Lord;
The Church and Nation must united be,
And ruled in all things by divine decree.

3.

For this great end, their course was led
By Moses, their appointed head,
Through desert lands for forty years;
And here their history appears
The grace and majesty of God to prove
By wondrous acts of judgment and of love.

4.

From Sinai's mount He gave His law ;
While all the people heard and saw
The thunders roll, the lightnings blaze,
And, struck with terror, feared to gaze
On the dark cloud from which the thrilling sound
Of the archangel's trumpet shook the ground !

5.

The favored Moses, all alone,
Held with the High and Holy One
Familiar converse for the space
Of forty days and nights : with grace
Especial and divine he was endued ;
Nor did he feel the need of other food.

6.

Engraved on stone, the Ten Commands
Were then delivered to his hands :
The sacred Tabernacle's plan
He learned with zealous care to scan ;
And Israel's wondrous code to him was given
By the direct authority of Heaven.

7.

The mystic shrine, with gorgeous art,
Was now prepared in every part ;
The Covenant Ark of grace was there ;
The Cherubim, of sculpture rare ;
The mercy-seat whose glory none could tell,
For God had promised here in light to dwell.

8.

Holy of Holies was its name ;
 And next, within the sacred frame,
 A larger room was duly placed,
 With solemn symbols fitly graced,
 Where stood the incense-altar, fair in sight,
 The show-bread table, and the sevenfold light.

9.

Into the first, but once a year,
 The high priest might with awe appear ;
 Into the other, twice a day
 The priests might enter, there to pray :
 Yet still alone ; each ordered, in his turn,
 To trim the lamp, and incense pure to burn.

10.

With marvellous skill, divinely wise,
 'Twas all arranged to symbolize
 The glory of the Gospel plan,
 When God, in Christ, should dwell with man :
 The outward room to mark the Church was given ;
 The inward was a standing type of Heaven.

11.

For once a year, with contrite breast,
 The sins of Israel were confessed
 Upon the destined scape-goat's head,
 Which straight was to the desert led,
 That he the nation's guilt might bear away,
 While the slain victim on the altar lay.

12.

And then the high priest took the blood
Within the veil, and humbly stood
Before the mercy-seat, and there
Bowed prostrate down, in fervent prayer
That God the sacrifice would now receive,
And all His people's crimes with grace forgive!

13.

Here was the type which, to the faith
Of Israel, shadowed forth the death
Of Christ, our victim, on whose head
The world's transgressions should be laid;
While He, our great High Priest, in heaven
should own
And plead His blood - stained Cross before the
Throne.

14.

Aaron was now, by God's decree,
Ordained the first high priest to be:
His sons were priests; and, for their aid,
The Levites were by law arrayed.
Henceforth, as teachers in the Church's school,
A threefold ministry was called to rule.

15.

And then was fixed a noble code
Of other laws, proclaimed by God
Through faithful Moses, to whose hand
The Lord still gave supreme command;
While miracles in rich abundance came
To vindicate his truth, and raise his fame.

16.

For forty years they had no home,
Doomed through the wilderness to roam ;
And sore they taxed their leader's skill
By their rebellious, wayward will :
Though forced the constant power of Heaven to
 prove
In awful judgments, and in tender love.

17.

To feed the host, the Lord supplies
The bread of angels from the skies ;
For drink, He gives them, without stint,
Pure water from the rock of flint ;
Their garments suffer nought from time or wear ;
And he protects them with a father's care.

18.

But oft their murmuring hearts repine,
And still to mutiny incline :
They bow before the calf of gold ;
The rebel Korah they uphold ;
Seduced by Midian's wiles, in sin they stray,
And worship idols in the heathen way.

19.

The Lord recalls them from each snare
By dire inflictions, hard to bear :
Forth come the pestilence and sword,
And fiery serpents, at His word ;
The earthquake cleaves the ground before their
 sight ;
And Israel quails with terror and affright !

20.

At length on Jordan's banks they stand,
And Moses views the Promised Land :
With mournful though submissive heart
He hears the summons to depart ;
His spirit rises to the eternal throne,
His body's buried in a place unknown !

21.

But, ere his glorious course was sped,
He laid his hands on Joshua's head
By God's command, that he might be
The nation's guide to victory ;
And conquest after conquest came to tell
The power divine by which old Canaan fell.

22.

Thus Israel triumphed, by the might
Of God, in all the heathen's sight.
And yet, through want of courage meet,
Their victory was not complete ;
And many a conflict still remained to prove
The Church's lack of zealous faith and love.

23.

While Joshua lived, they did not stray
Far from the sure, appointed way :
But when he died, the idol arts
Of Satan oft allured their hearts ;
And then the Lord chastised them, till the reign
Of heathen bondage forced them back again.

24.

And oft as they repented still,
And sought to do His holy will,
He sent deliverance by the hand
Of Judges, and restored the land ;
And once a woman, Deborah, was led,
Strong in prophetic power, to be their head.

25.

The holy Samuel next we view,
A ruler and a prophet too,
In whose old age new troubles spring ;
For Israel now demands a king !
'Twas not enough to have their King in heaven :
A king on earth to lead them must be given !

26.

Samuel would fain their prayer deny ;
But God commands him to comply :
Though 'twas a sin in them to break
Their form of government, and take
Their system from the heathen, when the Lord
Had fixed another by His holy Word.

27.

Saul was the first to wear the crown.
Then David rose to great renown.
The Psalmist of the Church was he,
Famous in war and minstrelsy ;
The prophet-king, endowed with heavenly art,
And called a monarch after God's own heart !

28.

And to his honor 'twas decreed,
That from the royal David's seed
The great Messiah should be born,
Who should His Father's throne adorn
In that far-distant but most glorious day,
When all the world should own his righteous sway.

29.

Next Solomon appeared, to shine
In wisdom, by the gift divine;
And, in his peaceful reign, the power
Of Israel reached its brightest hour.
The Queen of Sheba came his name to greet;
And monarchs sat as learners at his feet.

30.

The glorious Temple rose with grace
The Tabernacle to replace;
The king's fair palace, and his throne,
In all the pomp of splendor shone;
And distant sovereigns well might stand amazed
As on such bright magnificence they gazed.

31.

But yet his wisdom had no part
In ruling his own sensual heart:
He multiplied his wives far more
Than any king had done before,
And then, their flattery or their love to gain,
Defiled the land with many a heathen fane.

32.

For David's sake, the Lord allowed
His reign to close with scarce a cloud ;
But soon his proud successor saw
Ten tribes of Israel withdraw :
The nation's unity was lost ; and strife,
Discord, and war deformed their future life.

33.

Two kingdoms thus were formed from one, —
Judah and Israel. But alone
In Judah was the Church's round
Of sacred truth and order found ;
There was the priesthood, there the Temple stood,
The ark of mercy, and the victim's blood.

34.

The King of Israel, Jeroboam,
To keep his subjects safe at home,
Set up his priests, by interest bought,
And in the lowest classes sought :
For these he formed a new religious plan,
And placed two calves, at Bethel and at Dan.

35.

Idolatry grew rampant soon ;
Their base desires were in attune
With all the heathen nations round,
And loved the pleasures which abound
Where sensual lusts their lawless power impart,
And conscience holds no rein upon the heart.

36.

But yet the mercy of the Lord
Sent them the prophets of his word :
Elijah feared not to assail,
With single hand, the priests of Baal ;
By numerous miracles he gained a name,
And then went up to heaven in living flame.

37.

Elisha followed in his might,
Performing wonders in their sight ;
Schools of the prophets were ordained,
By whom the truth was well sustained :
The kings of Israel owned Elisha's sway,
And proud Assyria fled in fear away.

38.

Yet Satan o'er the faith prevailed ;
Predictions, warnings, judgments, failed ;
The time of God's indulgence passed,
And Israel was given up at last.
Assyria conquered : all their hope was o'er ;
The Tribes were scattered, and returned no more !

39.

Judah stood longer, by the aid
Of her celestial system stayed ;
Her forms of worship were divine,
And truth continued there to shine :
The Scriptures still were read, the Psalms were
sung,
And God's high praises through her Temple rung.

40.

But yet the adversary's art
Wrought in her rebel priesthood's heart ;
Their faith was neither pure nor warm,
Their worship fell to lifeless form :
Until at length even Judah came to be
The shameless home of foul idolatry.

41.

Here, too, the Lord had kindly given
The prophet's warning voice from heaven ;
Isaiah's pages strongly state
Their guilt, their danger, and their fate ;
And Jeremiah follows up the strain
With urgent earnestness : alas, in vain !

42.

Behold! the King of Babylon,
With all his host, comes thundering on !
Jerusalem's embattled wall,
Her temple, and her palace fall !
Her children captive exiles have become,
And God has left her to her mournful doom !

CANTO VI.

1.

THE Jews in Babylon were pressed
With grief which gave their hearts no rest ;
Zion in memory they kept,
And bitter were the tears they wept :
They hung their harps upon the willows there,
And had no voice to sing in their despair.

2.

Yet God did not desert them ! Still,
Ezekiel prophesied His will :
Through Daniel's tongue, before the king,
The Lord His truth was pleased to bring ;
And His resistless power He deigned to show
In Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

3.

Thus by the chastening hand of Heaven
The Jews to penitence were driven ;
While Babylon was taught with fear
The God of Israel to revere ;
And Bel's proud priests were all compelled to
own
How idol powers must quail before His throne !

4.

But now the seventy years, at last,
Defined by Jeremiah, passed :
The Jews, who had not ceased to mourn
Their fallen land, might yet return ;
For Cyrus had proclaimed his high decree,
And to rebuild their city set them free.

5.

With joy the people and the priest,
From heathen Babylon released,
Obeyed the generous sovereign's call,
To raise again old Salem's wall ;
And Judah's sons, from their sad exile led,
Began once more to lift their drooping head.

6.

Preserved by an Almighty hand,
The Church assumed a faithful stand ;
The Synagogue commenced its round
Of service, and in Ezra found
A holy prophet, qualified to frame
The form of prayer which still retains his name.

7.

Through Haggai's earnest zeal, at length,
The second Temple rose in strength ;
Though far less costly, rich and fair,
Than that which once had flourished there ;
Yet destined to a more sublime display
Of love and mercy in the Saviour's day.

8.

Five centuries yet their course must run
Before the birth of God's great Son,
Who, from His Father's throne descending,
Both natures in One Person blending,
Should come His Church to reconstruct once more,
With heavenly grace and power unknown before.

9.

Meanwhile, from time to time, the Lord
Sent forth His high prophetic word
To warn the faithless, and to raise
The honest hearts that sought His praise;
Till Malachi poured forth his strain divine,
And closed, with powerful voice, the ancient line.

10.

The Jews, beneath the Persian rule,
Went forward in Religion's school,
And cherished all their precious store
Of sacred Scripture. But the lore
Of the Chaldeans rose to guide their way,
And led their commentators far astray.

11.

They grew in numbers and in wealth,
But not in truth or moral health.
The Pharisees set up their claim,
And gained a high sectarian fame
Amongst the crowd; while those of nobler birth
Were Sadducees, who only cared for earth.

12.

The first maintained a lofty faith,
With bitter zeal as strong as death ;
Affected, by their looks and dress,
A stern devotion to express ;
But still the path of superstition trod,
And took tradition for the Word of God.

13.

The Sadducees, with worldly pride,
The hope of future life denied.
Religion's laws they held to be
Of use in earthly polity ;
But all beyond they thought it wise to deem
The idle progeny of fancy's dream.

14.

Some steadfast souls there were, though few,
Who kept the mean between the two :
And these preserved the system, given
By the pure light revealed from heaven ;
Walked in the way of wisdom from their youth,
And worshipped God in spirit and in truth.

15.

Now came the period, long before
By Daniel prophesied, when o'er
The Persian empire ruin fell,
And Greece in Babylon should dwell.
The Macedonian prince in arms rushed on
To seize the power of old Darius' throne.

16.

The Jews were placed in peril then,
Till God enabled them to gain
The conqueror's favor. At the head
Of a procession, duly led,
The high priest met the warrior king advancing,
With swords and spears in the bright sunshine
glancing.

17.

But far, more glorious was the sight
Of scarlet, blue, and dazzling white, —
The mitre, all with gold embossed, —
The breastplate, which in splendor crossed
The pontiff's chest, and flashed with jewels rare,
While solemn chants rose floating on the air.

18.

Then came the white-robed priests in line ;
Their golden censers wave and shine ;
The incense breathes its odors sweet ;
And now the pontiff stands to greet
The youthful victor with a gracious word :
"Welcome, great king, the warrior of the Lord !"

19.

The haughty monarch bends in awe :
"Behold," he cries, "the form I saw
In the plain vision of the night,
Clothed in the same array of light!
Speak, mighty priest ! obedient I shall hear
Whate'er thy voice addresses to mine ear."

20.

The pontiff hails the joyful sound ;
The path of royal grace is found :
He calls the conqueror to a feast ;
And there, from all his fears released,
He points attention to the prophet's voice,
And bids the king in God's decree rejoice !

21.

The youthful Alexander, fired
With ardor, heard the Word inspired,
And though he was a heathen still,
Yet showed a constant, generous will
Towards all the nation, whose high priest had
 given
Such warrant from the oracles of heaven.

22.

The victor ran his proud career ;
Subdued all nations far and near ;
Founded the city, known to fame,
Which bore his own transcendent name ;
And there transplanted, with a liberal hand,
Of old Judæa's sons, a numerous band.

23.

Full soon these zealous Jews, upheld
By his munificence, excelled
In their great Synagogue's renown ;
And when the hand of death struck down
Their royal patron, they retained their place
Of trust and honor, as a favored race.

24.

Four generals of the warrior king
Their troops forthwith to battle bring ;
And fierce and bloody was the strife
For empire, as if 'twere for life :
But when the rival powers were almost spent,
Each with his separate crown was well content.

25.

Egypt was wealthy at that day,
And held a large and prosperous sway.
King Ptolemy set up his throne
At Alexandria, and shone
Above his brother monarchs by the zeal
Which few like him were ever known to feel.

26.

The zeal for learning and for art,
This claimed the generous sovereign's heart :
A noble library he planned,
Rich with the spoils of every land ;
And soon the enterprise, so well designed,
Won the warm admiration of mankind.

27.

Tw'as then that seventy men of skill
Were chosen, by the royal will,
To write the Word of God in Greek ;
For every one that tongue could speak :
While Hebrew was a language rarely known,
And few esteemed it save the Jews alone.

28.

The seal of Scripture thus was broken
Where'er the Grecian tongue was spoken ;
The wise of every land could see
Some part of Truth's great mystery ;
And so another instrument was given
To aid the Church, by the decree of Heaven.

29.

But war arose 'twixt Syria's power
And Egypt : 'twas a bitter hour
For poor Judæa. All in vain
She strove her freedom to regain ;
Subjected to a heathen throne she lay,
And pure religion sunk into decay.

30.

The Syrian king Seleucus sent
His venal agent, with intent
To rob the Temple ; but the shrine
Was guarded by a force divine :
Angelic forms appeared with scourge of flame,
And drove the miscreant forth in fear and shame.

31.

Again a cruel despot rose, —
Antiochus, who madly chose
To plant an idol in the place
Which God's own presence deigned to grace ;
While, at the penalty of death, he strove
To make the Jews do sacrifice to Jove.

32.

Then came the martyr-spirit high ;
The faithful were content to die,
Spurned with contempt the king's command,
And brought a blessing on their land :
For now the Lord displayed his saving might,
To give them honor in the heathen's sight.

33.

Brave Judas Maccabæus flew
To arms, and Israel's trumpet blew :
A zealous troop soon gathered round ;
And, as of old, the heathen found
How o'er their proudest hosts the victor trod,
Whose sword was wielded in the cause of God.

34.

The Lord in grace the Word had spoken :
The Syrian tyrant's rod was broken,
Jerusalem once more released,
Her Temple cleansed by the high priest,
The Church restored to all her ancient power,
And hymns of praise proclaimed the joyful hour !

35.

Thus haply freed, the nation grew
And prospered. Judas, good and true,
Resigned at death his high command
To Jonathan his brother's hand :
And then another brother, Simon, came,
And wore a kingly crown with honest fame.

36.

But he, by earthly views misled
 The ways of policy to tread,
 Esteemed it wisdom to become
 A firm ally of heathen Rome.
 The Jews deplored the error in the end :
 They gained a master where they sought a friend !

37.

Hyrchanus next, King Simon's son,
 By just succession held the throne.
 His reign was happy, save that now
 The Pharisees, with haughty brow,
 Opposed the Sadducees in zealous strife,
 And frequent discord vexed the monarch's life.

38.

Another of that famous line
 Then swayed the kingdom. To combine
 The factious force of rival sect
 Was more than he could e'er effect.
 He died. His widow ruled awhile alone,
 And left two sons to quarrel for the throne.

39.

The Roman allies were called in :
 Their work they willingly begin.
 Hyrchanus — second of that name —
 Established soon his royal claim
 By Roman arms. Poor Judah's pride was o'er :
 A tributary now, and free no more !

40.

This was the time when Cæsar's power
Had culminated, till the hour
Which no diviner could foretell
Arrived, and the great hero fell !
Pompey, Judæa's conqueror, was dead ;
And Rome's proud troops by hostile chiefs were led.

41.

Herod, of Idumæan race,
Had gained a Tetrarch's honored place
O'er Galilee ; and, when the blow
Of faction laid great Cæsar low,
Brutus and Cassius seemed the safer guide,
And Herod deemed it best to take their side.

42.

But Brutus perished in the field :
The patriots to Octavius yield ;
And he, though lately quite unknown,
Built up a proud imperial throne
Of modest claims, but of effective sway,
Which governed, while professing to obey.

43.

His policy was to appear
The servant of the Senate. Dear
To every Roman heart and mind
Was that grand body, which combined
The form of a Republic with the force
Of royal power, through all their history's course.

44.

But while the Senate governed still,
'Twas guided by his secret will :
Step after step, the whole were led
By his profound and crafty head ;
And thus Augustus gained imperial fame,
Without the odium of a tyrant's name.

45.

Herod his error quickly saw,
And labored with success to draw
A plan of deep and flattering art,
By which he won the emperor's heart ;
Until at length Hyrcanus was cast down,
And he secured the prize of Israel's crown.

46.

And now the sceptre passed away
From Judah, and the glorious day
Of God's Messiah was at hand,
Fulfilling the divine command
Revealed, in words of high prophetic power,
By pious Jacob, at his dying hour.*

47.

The Church retained her ancient face ;
Each day, at the appointed place,
The sacrifice was duly slain
Before the high and holy fane :
The Temple stood majestic, rich, and fair ;
And incense breathed, and psalms were chanted
there.

* Gen. xlix. 10.

48.

Four hundred Synagogues were schools,
 Where all Jerusalem the rules
 Of pure religion's truth acquired
 From Moses, whom the Lord inspired ;
 While Scribes and Pharisees held constant sway,
 And bore the palm of public praise away.

49.

But 'twas a vain and outward show !
 In each rebellious heart, below,
 Pride and ambition, lust and hate,
 Bare witness to their carnal state :
 The priests themselves were covetous of gold,
 And even the pontiff's place was bought and sold !

50.

With rage they saw that heathen Rome
 Their nation's master had become ;
 That Rome to Judah's race could bring
 A hateful Edomite for king ;
 That in the holy city he could sport
 With heathen customs and a heathen court.

51.

And so they longed, with anxious hope,
 To give their promised vengeance scope,
 To wash their footsteps in a flood
 Of heathen and ungodly blood,
 When Shiloh, their expected Prince, should
 reign,
 And Israel's foes should be in triumph slain.

52.

Inflated by their pride of birth,—
 The chosen race of all the earth,—
 Sure that to Abraham's seed was given
 The only pledge of joy in heaven,
 They put the warning words of God apart,
 And felt no need of holiness of heart.

53.

From Rome, a Saviour they required;
 From sin, no Saviour they desired!
 Alas! they were too blind to see
 Their inward guilt and misery!
 And when Messiah came to give them sight,
 They clung to darkness, and refused the Light!

Thus far, dear Reader, we have travelled o'er
 The history of four thousand years or more,—
 From the Creation to the wondrous Birth
 Which brought the Son of God to live on earth.

And here, perhaps, it may be well to say
 That my next task includes the Saviour's day,
 The toils of his Apostles, and the course
 By which the Church of Christ withstood the
 force
 Of heathen rage, led on by Satan's lure,
 Until the Gospel's triumph was secure.

Then comes the history of the ages dark,
When Superstition made her fearful mark
Upon the Church herself, and Popery hurled
Her baleful curse upon the Christian world.
Lastly the Reformation will appear,
With all its band of martyrs, bold, sincere,
And constant to that pure and Scriptural faith
For which they still contended unto death.

My future topics, therefore, well may yield
A larger and more interesting field.
To which I trust that you may give some hours,
With wise improvement of your higher powers.





HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

P A R T II.

CANTO I.

SENT by divine command, an angel came
From heaven to earth, and Gabriel was his name.
To Mary's home he took his airy flight,
And stood revealed in brightness to her sight.
"Hail, highly favored Maid!" the seraph said:
"The Lord His blessing sends upon thy head!
Thou shalt be Mother to the Son of God,
Who comes to free His people from the load
Of sin and sorrow, glorious in His love,
Ordained the Saviour of the world to prove:
Born of no human father He shall be,
Holy and pure by Heaven's supreme decree,
The throne of David shall to Him descend,
And of His kingdom there shall be no end."

The Virgin heard in trouble and surprise,
But meekly with submission raised her eyes:

“Behold!” she said, “the handmaid of the Lord!
Be it to me according to thy word.”
And surely ’twas a trial to her faith,
Involving peril worse by far than death.
Betrothed to Joseph, what must be her doom
If she were thus a mother to become,
While none but God could tell the wondrous tale,
And her poor statement would with none prevail?
Yet, though the thought called forth a silent tear,
A deep and solemn joy repressed her fear:
For she was blessed! From her inmost soul,
She gave herself at once to Heaven’s control;
Sought for her chamber’s privacy, and there
Poured out her grateful heart in praise and
prayer.

Joseph, her spouse according to the law
Of old Judæa, soon with sorrow saw,
In Mary’s altered form and blushing face,
The proof, as he supposed, of her disgrace.
She was his second wife, so fair, so young,
So pure as yet from calumny’s foul tongue,
He felt it hard to take a public course,
The strict Mosaic sentence to enforce;
And thought the rule of duty to obey,
By putting her quite privately away.

But soon his sad suspicions took their flight;
For, in a glorious vision of the night,
He sees an angel-form before him stand,
And hears with glad surprise the Lord’s com-
mand:

“Fear not to take the wife whom God has given :
Her child is the Messiah sent from heaven !”
Rejoiced he rises with the morning sun,
And hastes to make the welcome message known :
The wedding’s o’er, and Mary has become
The honored mistress of his humble home.

The pious Joseph plied the honest trade
Of carpenter. The Virgin was a maid
Of low condition. Yet they both could claim
Their high descent from royal David’s name.
This was a part of old prophetic lore,
Recorded full a thousand years before.

And now the time is come !
The faithful pious pair
Leave Nazareth, their humble home,
For Bethlehem, and there
Are forced in a poor stable to abide,
As if to pour contempt on earthly pride.

But soon the infant form
Of Jesus, pure and bright,
Pressed to his mother’s bosom warm,
And viewed with fond delight,
Appears. What mortal tongue may claim the
power
To tell the grateful rapture of that hour !

The night was dark and still ;
The shepherds on the plain

Watched o'er their flocks with simple skill ;
 When, lo ! a shining train
 Of light celestial burst upon their eyes,
 And filled their hearts with terror and surprise.

The angel of the Lord
 Stands now revealed to sight !
 "Fear not," he said, with gracious word
 Calming the shepherds' fright :
 "To you in Bethlehem is born, this day,
 The Saviour, whom the powers of heaven obey."

Transfixed with awe, they hear
 The sweet unearthly sound ;
 And straight an angel host appear
 With waving wings around :
 From seraph lips pours forth the exulting strain,
 "Glory to God ; peace and good will to men !"

Across the desert wide,
 The waste of barren sand,
 Behold the Eastern Magi ride,
 A zealous, royal band !
 Alarmed, King Herod hears the startling news, —
 They seek the infant Sovereign of the Jews !

A weary journey far
 They travel from their home ;
 Led by a shining meteor-star,
 To worship Him they come ;
 With grateful joy the Babe divine they greet,
 And lay their choicest treasures at His feet.

Their act of pious worship o'er
To Him whom they in faith adore,
They seek their home without delay,
But travel by a different way,
Obedient to the warning given
In visions of the night from heaven.
And thus King Herod was beguiled ;
For he had meant to slay the Child,
Lest He, grown up, should seize the throne
Intended for the tyrant's son.

But now, enraged, this cruel man
Resolved upon a horrid plan
To murder all the infants found
In Bethlehem's prophetic ground.
Straight at the furious despot's word,
His reckless soldiers drew the sword :
The mothers strove with maddened brain
To save their precious babes, in vain ;
They struggled, shrieked, and tore their hair
In all the wildness of despair :
But force their feeble power subdued,
And nought could stay the work of blood.

And did this awful sin succeed ?
Did Christ amid that slaughter bleed ?
Could Herod's wicked heart and hand
Thwart the Almighty's high command ?
Not so. The Lord foresaw the crime,
And Joseph was informed in time,

Admonished in the dead of night
To rise forthwith, and take his flight
To Egypt with the infant Child,
And His pure Mother undefiled,
There in full safety to remain
Till Herod's death should end his reign.

Nor was it long until the hour
Which swept away his pride and power.
His closing years were few and brief,
His heart was torn with rage and grief,
While hate and jealousy's control,
Fears and suspicions, racked his soul.
From crime to crime remorseless driven,
No hope was his in earth or heaven.
Though human flattery called him "Great,"
Though throned in pomp and royal state,
Yet through his realm 'twere hard to see
A more unhappy wretch than he.

But Herod had a liberal hand
Towards all who bowed at his command.
The priests of Israel, bought and sold,
Shared largely in the monarch's gold :
Their Temple's wants were well supplied
As well from policy as pride,
And vast the sums he lavished there
To ornament the House of Prayer.
The sycophants with loud acclaim
Honored the generous sovereign's name,
Until at length a favored few

Gave him the title justly due
To the Messiah! Impious boast
Of men to truth and virtue lost!
But from their false and venal tongue
The sect of the Herodians sprung.

The power of Rome which ruled the land
Next gave the sceptre to the hand
Of Archelaus, Herod's son;
And, when his reign had well begun,
Joseph, directed by the word
Which came, in slumber, from the Lord,
Well pleased, from Egypt took his road,
And fixed at Nazareth his abode.
The holy Child in stature grew,
In knowledge and in wisdom too,
Endowed all mysteries to scan,
And favored both by God and man.

Bound for Jerusalem, to join
The yearly feast by law divine,
His parents took the Youth along
With the accustomed happy throng
Of friends and neighbors, called at least
To spend a week in solemn feast,
And thus with joy and gladness prove
The social power of kindred love.

But Ho, on higher thoughts intent,
His footsteps to the Temple bent
To meet His heavenly Father there

In His own hallowed House of Prayer.
His guardians missed Him when the day
Arrived to take their homeward way.
His Mother's heart with grief was bowed ;
In vain they sought Him in the crowd ;
Until at length the Youth was found
Seated with Israel's Rabbies round,
Who heard His answers, all amazed,
Doubting their senses while they gazed,
That He, a Boy of twelve years old,
Could such deep mysteries unfold,
Surpassing all their boasted lore,
With wisdom never known before !

The Virgin Mother felt that He
Had caused her much anxiety,
And straightway gave Him a rebuke,
Which He with words of warning took.
"Son," she exclaimed, "why hast Thou gone
From our society alone ?
Thy father and myself, in fear,
Have sought Thee sorrowing, far and near."
"How did ye seek Me?" thus He said :
"Did ye not know My heart and head
Must be employed, with constant mind,
About the solemn work assigned
By my true Father ?" With a sigh
The Virgin heard her Son's reply.
His meaning was not fully seen ;
But yet she felt that she had been
Unjust and hasty. Well she knew

The name of father was not due
To Joseph. Nor had He transgressed
In any wise her least behest.
She left Him free to use His powers
Like others, in those festive hours.
Where should the Son of God be found
If not upon His Father's ground?
Instead of blame, she should have given
Praise that His course still led to heaven.
Whatever else His words might mean,
Thus far, at least, their drift was seen;
And, though mysterious still in part,
She laid them up within her heart.

But though our Lord was raised so high
Above His friends in dignity,
Transcending by His heavenly birth
The greatest monarchs upon earth,
Yet He had no desire to shun
The labors due from Mary's son
To her and Joseph. At a word,
He followed them with full accord;
Promptly obedient to their will,
And subject to their bidding still,
Up to the period when, as man,
His wondrous work of grace began,
A ruined world from sin to save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.

CANTO II.

THE ancient prophets plainly had foretold
The great forerunner of the Son of God.
The course of time through centuries onward
 rolled,
And John the Baptist sent his voice abroad.

Like old Elijah, clothed in camel's hair,
With the same fearless energy endued,
With locks unshorn, and feet and ankles bare, —
Locusts and honey wild his only food, —

In the vast wilderness he raised his cry,
“Repent, repent, heaven's kingdom is at hand!”
He spake with piercing voice and flashing eye,
And multitudes obeyed his stern command.

Crowds upon crowds came forth to see and hear
This fervent herald of Messiah's reign ;
And, lo ! the Scribes and Pharisees appear,
The preacher's wondrous influence to restrain.

But vain their hope ! In accents bold and true,
He drives his fearful accusation home :
“Ye race of vipers ! who hath warned you
To flee the terrors of the wrath to come ?

“ Now to the root the axe at last is laid ;
Down to the ground is hewn each worthless tree,
Doomed to the fire ! and though in pride arrayed,
That awful end your destiny may be.

“ Repent and be baptized ; with earnest care
Confess aloud the guilt in which you fall :
It will not purge your sins, but will prepare
The way for Him who can forgive them all.

“ He is the gracious, blessed Lamb of God,
Ordained the world’s transgressions to remove :
With water I baptize, but He with blood,
The Spirit, and the Fire, bestowed in love.

“ He standeth now among you, born of heaven :
I am of earth. No miracles I do :
To Him, the Son of God, all power is given ;
I am not worthy to unloose His shoe.”

Thus spake the great forerunner of the Lord,
And all Judæa heard the glorious theme :
The Scribes and Pharisees refused his word ;
The rest were all baptized in Jordan’s stream.

At last the Saviour came, and sought to be
Baptized like others ; but St. John forbade :
“ My duty is to be baptized by Thee ;
And comest Thou to me ? ” the Baptist said.

“Even so,” replied our Lord: “’tis just and good
That I all righteousness should well fulfil.”
St. John submitted, and the mystic flood
Was poured upon Him at His sacred will.

And now behold a wonder! From the sky
Descends the Holy Spirit like a dove,
And rests upon Him; while a voice on high
Proclaims His heavenly Father’s grace and love.

’Twas thus, appointed by supreme command,
Our great High Priest commenced His task divine,
The powers of Sin and Satan to withstand,
And with them all in mortal strife to join.

For the fallen angel who rebelled in heaven,
And gathered round him an apostate crew,
Had down to earth in punishment been driven,
In hopeless woe his wanton guilt to rue.

And there, by subtle and demoniac art,
He gained o’er human minds a vast control,
Defiled the nature of each mortal’s heart,
And taught his own foul worship to the soul.

To our weak thought, it might at first appear
That all this evil had prevented been,
If the decree which brought those devils here
Had cut them off in vengeance for their sin.

But God, who knoweth all things, doubtless saw
That His vast universe would better learn
The blessings of obedience to His law,
When the results of sin they could discern.

For who can question that the countless host
Of worlds on worlds, created by His power,
Are all informed how happiness was lost,
By rebel treason, to the present hour?

The holy angels came full oft from heaven
To show mankind the only way to bliss :
Why should we doubt their ministry is given
To all the other worlds as well as this?

Satan's rebellion, therefore, must be known,
And man's, by his temptation, through the range
Of the whole universe ; though this alone
Could not suffice the sinner's doom to change.

Yet the dark history of the angel's fall
Has thus become a warning plain and clear
For myriads ; since his awful fate to all
A constant lesson reads of holy fear.

Expelled from heaven, his life with misery fraught,
The fruits of guilt they cannot fail to see ;
And hence, by his experience, they are taught
How sin and woe must still companions be.

He and his foul associates were the first
Who rose rebellious 'gainst their glorious King :
They sinned without temptation ; thrice accursed,
No hope to their despair could mercy bring.

But man was tempted by Satanic art ;
And this might well a ground of difference prove
Through which divine compassion could impart
The light of pardon by the Saviour's love.

For, by His merits and His death, the reign
Of Sin and Satan, in the end, shall fall,
The tempter's dark delusions prove in vain,
And God's rich mercy triumph o'er them all.

But the first act in the celestial plan
Required a conflict with the rebel's might ;
And hence our Lord, the heaven-descended Man,
Must meet and put our enemy to flight.

For this the Spirit led the Son of God
In the wild desert forty days to stay ;
Fasting from meat and drink, while all abroad
The savage beasts were roaming for their prey.

Then Satan came his subtle skill to try,
And move to sin that pure and holy heart :
Calmly our Lord returned His prompt reply,
While words of Scripture foiled the tempter's art.

At length the fiend was suffered to convey
The Saviour to a lofty mountain's height,
And there exhibited, with proud display,
The kingdoms of the world in all their might.

"These are mine own," the vaunting rebel said;
"To whom I will, their wealth I can resign :
To worship me but once bow down thy head,
And all their pomp and glory shall be thine."

"Get thee behind me, Satan!" saith our Lord,
"Thou foe to all that is divine and true :
The God of heaven alone must be adored ;
Worship and service both to Him are due."

The tempter's arts were all exhausted now ;
Conquered, he fled in shame and sore amaze ;
And angels came, before their King to bow,
His frame to nourish, and His work to praise.

CANTO III.

VICTORIOUS by the Spirit's sword,
Provided in the written Word,
The Saviour next proceeds to choose
Amongst the humblest of the Jews
His Twelve Apostles. Earthly aid,
In learning, wealth, or power arrayed,

He would not have to mar the plan
Designed for every rank of man.
For this He took His lowly place
Amongst the poorer of the race ;
For this His chosen band should be
The fishermen of Galilee, —
Born on the most degraded soil
Of all Judæa, sons of toil,
Uncouth, unlettered. Only so
Could all mankind His mission know
To be divine, when such as these,
By the sole force of heaven's decrees,
Should plant His Church in full despite
Of earthly policy and might ;
Thus proving that the path they trod
Was opened by the hand of God.

The prophets had foretold the hour,
When, by the great Messiah's power,
Amazing wonders should be wrought,
Surpassing every human thought.
And now our Lord's almighty will
Began the promise to fulfil.
He made each fell disease to flee,
The deaf to hear, the blind to see,
The lame to walk, and the insane
Were brought to their right mind again.
The palsied wretch His word could raise ;
The dumb were taught His power to praise ;
The lepers hastened, at His voice,
In health and vigor to rejoice ;

While the possessed, within whose frame
The devils dwelt, where'er He came
Were forced His mandate to obey,
And, smote with terror, fled away.

Nor were these miracles the whole :
All Nature owned His high control.
He hushed the tempest at His will
By only saying, " Peace, be still !"
He walked upon the waves, His feet
Sustained as by the solid street.
Five loaves and two small fish, increased
By His command, produced a feast
For many thousands. Even the grave
Proved His almighty power to save ;
And Lazarus' corpse, when it had lain
Four days beneath corruption's reign,
Rose, at His word, to life again.

Such marvellous works had never been
Amongst the chosen Israel seen.
'Twas true that acts of wondrous praise
Were likewise wrought in Moses' days, —
True that the prophets, one by one,
Some glorious miracles had done ;
But yet these facts we may recall
To prove how Christ excelled them all.

For, first, to them 'twas only given
To act as ministers of heaven.
" Thus saith the Lord," they all proclaim ;

Their works were in Jehovah's Name ;
But Christ was Lord, in Him alone
The "fulness of the Godhead" shone.
And hence He does not use the phrase
Employed in the old prophets' days :
"I say," "I will," is still the mode
Which proved that He was One with God.

Next we behold our Lord pursue —
What saints and prophets never knew —
A track of comprehensive power,
Relieving woe in every hour ;
Prompt at the humblest suppliant's call,
Extending precious gifts to all,
And ever ready to impart
A blessing to the suffering heart.
We might as well compare the light
Shed by the starry host at night
With the effulgence of the sun,
As weigh the wonders He has done
Against the deeds of all who came
To Israel in a prophet's name.

Could they, however well inclined,
Restore the crazed, the lame, the blind,
The deaf, the dumb, the tempest still,
And cast out Satan at their will ?
Bright in their several orbs they shine :
But they were human ; He, divine.

Thirdly, in Christ alone we trace
The right, so needed by our race,
To pardon sin. On no mere man
Was this bestowed since time began.
'Twas for His Deity to say,
"Thy guilt's forgiven and washed away."
'Twas God in Christ who gave release,
And filled the soul with joy and peace.

And, lastly, we behold our Lord
Pronouncing a transcendent word,
When His apostles, from His hand,
Received the power, by His command,
To heal the sick where'er they came,
And cast out devils in His name:
Thus proving, that in Him abode
The might and majesty of God.

St. John the Baptist was renowned;
His fame had filled the country round:
But yet against him soon arose
An active band of bitter foes.
The Pharisees' malignant crew,
The learned Jewish doctors too,
Whom he denounced in terms so plain,
In turn denounced him back again
As a fanatic fool, possessed
With a foul spirit. Still the rest
Refused such calumny to deal,
And praised his fearless, honest zeal;
While his disciples on his side
Contended, and his foes defied.

At length the royal Herod came,
Attracted by the preacher's fame,
And heard him gladly for a time,
Till he rebuked the monarch's crime
In leading an adulterous life
With his own brother Philip's wife, —
The vile Herodias. She, enraged,
Her artful influence engaged
To have the weak, subservient king
Imprison John, with threats to bring
Destruction on his guiltless head
For words of treason, foully said,
His sovereign's virtue to disown,
And bring reproach against the throne.

The holy man in durance lay ;
When Herod fixed his natal day
To be distinguished by a feast,
Where every lord should be a guest.
Large was the company which poured
With joy around the royal board.
The daintiest meats were served with care,
The wine was quaffed in goblets rare ;
When, lo ! the daughter of the queen
Enters the hall with graceful mien,
Sent by her artful mother there,
The monarch's weakness to insnare.
The music sounds, her steps advance
With the gay movements of the dance,
In all her Eastern beauty's pride ;
And plaudits ring from every side.

The king, delighted, claps his hands ;
And now the maid before him stands.
Inflamed by wine, he swears her task
Deserves whatever she should ask ;
And she, well pleased, withdraws to find
Direction from her mother's mind.

Her lesson learned, she comes again.
The king repeats his oath. But when
She asked that John the Baptist's head
Be given her in a charger, fled
At once was all the monarch's glee ;
Sobered and sad he seemed to be ;
While round the board, through every man,
A sudden thrill of horror ran !

But yet they understood the case.
They knew the cause of John's disgrace.
They knew Herodias' vengeful heart.
They knew her deep deceitful art.
They knew her influence o'er the king,
Sooner or later sure to bring
Death to the object of her hate.
Why should they seek to stay his fate ?
'Twould be a risk such course to try.
The hapless man was doomed to die.
The King must act alone. 'Twas clear
They were not bound to interfere.

Thus did the base and selfish crew
Quiet their conscience, with a view

To their own ease. The monarch bent
His gaze upon them, with intent
To find if any friendly tongue
Would aid him to escape the wrong :
But all were silent ; and though loth,
Entangled by his foolish oath,
And thinking that his court would blame
If he his royal faith should shame,
The wavering despot gave the word
To slay the herald of the Lord.

O Martyr to the truth of God !
How glorious was the path he trod !
How soon the shadowy vale was passed !
How happy was his lot at last !
By angels borne, his spirit came
Among the saints of highest name,
Welcomed to Paradise, with joy,
His powers forever to employ,
Where love and holiness combine
In bliss and pleasure all divine.

What comfort could Herodias gain ?
What peace the tyrant king attain ?
In all their pride of pomp and power,
Fear and remorse still marked each hour.
In stormy passion's dark control,
They lost the sunshine of the soul,
By sad experience doomed to know,
How sin must lead to pain and woe
Even here. But oh, hereafter ! — who
Can tell the miseries which ensue ?

CANTO IV.

THE wondrous works which Christ so freely
wrought,
His holy doctrine reaching to the heart,
Drew crowds, by whom the powerful aid was
sought
Which He alone was able to impart.

The voice of fame grew louder and more bold,
And stronger daily grew the hope that He
Would prove the great Messiah, born to hold
King David's throne, and set His people free.

For heathen Rome oppressed them with her yoke ;
Their native kings no longer held the sway ;
They felt the change of which the prophets spoke,
And saw how Zion's glory passed away.

The time had come by Zechariah set,
When Israel her true Monarch should proclaim ;
And an excited throng with zeal had met
To pay due honor to Messiah's name.

Bound the divine prediction to sustain,
Our Lord to His disciples gives command,
That they a colt, unbroken to the rein,
Should bring, and yield it to His mighty hand.

They hold the struggling brute, alarmed and wild,
Placing their clothes for the Redeemer's seat ;
And, lo ! the colt, at once subdued and mild,
Moves freely on with slow and gentle feet.

The multitude a vast procession make :
With branches from the palm-trees waved on high,
And garments strewed upon the road, they take
Their way, and to Jerusalem draw nigh.

Shouting for joy, they enter through the gate ;
Blessing and praise from every lip arose ;
But "Who is this that cometh in such state ?"
Exclaimed the Pharisees, His bitter foes.

Prompt was the answer, "'Tis the mighty Son
Of David, ancient Israel's favorite king :
To His great name be highest honor done,
And loud hosannahs let His people sing."

The Saviour to the Temple takes His way,
And there beholds how, in that sacred fane,
Sellers of oxen and of doves display,
With money-changers, the foul greed of gain.

With holy indignation, He prepares
A whip of cords to scourge the venal band ;
While not one conscience-stricken culprit dares
To raise resistance to His mighty hand.

“Take these things hence !” the great Redeemer
cries:

“This holy place was not for Mammon made ;
No room is here for earthly merchandise ;
'Twas built for piety, and not for trade.

“My Father’s house should be the house of prayer,
Prayer which the humble soul from sin relieves ;
But ye have brought your love of money there,
And made it to become a den of thieves.”

The heavenly prophecy was now fulfilled ;
The act of holy discipline was done :
Their hearts in homage deep the people yield,
And seek by force to place Him on the throne.

But He had come to suffer, not to reign ;
In worldly honor He had no delight ;
The crowd’s applauding voice was all in vain ;
And He withdrew in silence from their sight.

For well He knew the kingdom they desired
Was one of earthly glory and renown ;
The conquest which their sensual minds required
Was but to hurl their Roman masters down.

Of Satan’s empire o’er the selfish soul
They had no consciousness, and felt no dread ;
Nor dreamed they how, through Sin’s corrupt con-
trol,
The wrath of God impended o’er their head.

In every form of teaching He displayed
The truth of heaven, — by parables divine ;
By solemn precepts plain and pointed made,
That so their hearts to wisdom might incline ;

By deeds of wondrous mercy day by day, —
Those marvels of almighty power and love, —
By warnings given to guide them in the way,
And strong rebukes their vices to reprove.

But while the people heard Him with good will,
And many followed Him in grateful joy,
The Scribes and Pharisees, with artful skill,
Used every means His influence to destroy.

These men had long the highest rank attained
For piety, among the Jewish race ;
In outward forms devout, and fully trained,
With sanctimonious air and solemn face.

At the street-corners oft they prayed aloud,
And blew a trumpet when their alms were given :
By arts like these they gained upon the crowd,
Who thought they were the favorites of Heaven.

Galled by the stern reproaches of St. John,
And envious of the Saviour's growing fame,
They slandered all the wonders He had done,
And vilified with zeal His sacred Name.

His miracles they dared not to deny
(Thousands had witnessed them as well as they);
But none, they argued, could on these rely,
Since Satan's power produced the whole display.

Our great Redeemer on the Sabbath gave
Relief to sufferers by His mighty word;
And this they called a profanation grave,
By every pious Jew to be abhorred!

The Son of the Most High He claimed to be,
Receiving constant worship as His due;
And this, they said, was open blasphemy,
As all who read the law of Moses knew!

With publicans and sinners He maintained
A kindly converse, and was oft their guest:
Of this with indignation they complained,
And loudly censured such polluted feast.

Yet, while by low companionship disgraced,
He claimed the dignity of Israel's king!
And "here," they cried, "rebellion may be traced,
Which on the land may Rome's proud vengeance
bring."

'Twas thus, by Satan's art, in error lost,
These Pharisees opposed the truth of Heaven;
And thus they sinned against the Holy Ghost,
That only sin which cannot be forgiven.

But though they held so proud and high a place,
And ruled the people with so strong a hand,
Our Lord against them firmly set His face,
And openly denounced the faithless band.

Before the multitude, in words of power,
By zeal divine and sacred justice led,
He warned them of the judgment's awful hour,
And uttered fearful woes upon their head.

He called them hypocrites, whose lives could tell
That they were like a tomb, with outside fair,
While dark within the damp and dreary cell
Lay bones and corpses, all corrupting there.

They closed the door of heaven by fraud and lies;
They entered not themselves; and those who tried
To enter there could ne'er to knowledge rise
By heartless forms or by self-righteous pride.

The widows and the orphans they despoiled,
And made long prayers to cover up the sin;
But the vile gain for which these robbers toiled
Deeper damnation from such prayers should win.

To make a proselyte was still their care;
For this their labors were most freely given:
But the poor wretch was taken in a snare,
And made a child of hell instead of heaven.

Pretending to revere the law of God,
Yet only by tradition taught to move,
They laid on others an oppressive load,
Without regard to mercy, truth, or love.

A race of vipers, venomous and vile,
The sons of those who erst the prophets slew,
Offspring of Satan, given to blood and spoil,
His are the deeds which they delight to do.

Woe to the hypocrites ! their arts display
Nought but the road of ruin to mankind :
How can they 'scape the awful judgment-day,
Or hope acceptance from the Lord to find ?

With such denunciations clear and strong,
The Saviour sought to break the fatal band
By which the Pharisees retained so long
Their baneful mastery throughout the land.

Yet the result was certain to His mind :
His prophets, centuries before that day,
Described the Jewish race as deaf and blind,
By Sin and Satan's falsehood led astray.

And He foretold, in words distinct and plain,
To His Apostles, how His course would end ; —
The triumph which His bitter foes should gain
In slaying Him, their best and truest friend.

He told them how His death the world should
save ;

How mocked and crucified their Lord must be ;
How He should rise victorious o'er the grave,
And from their bondage set His people free.

For then His Church, — His kingdom upon
earth, —

By His Apostles planted in His might,
Thronged with believing souls of heavenly birth,
Should grow and flourish in the heathens' sight.

And proud Jerusalem, who oft had killed
The prophets, and would now condemn her Lord,
Should be with famine and with slaughter filled,
To ruin doomed by His avenging sword.

Nor would that generation disappear
Till these predictions should accomplished prove :
His foes should be cast down in woe and fear ;
His friends should still be blessed with peace and
love.

'Twas so determined by divine decree ;
And who should dare gainsay the Lord's com-
mand ?
The earth and e'en the heavens might cease to be ;
But God's great purpose should forever stand !

CANTO V.

THREE years had now fulfilled their round,
Since, on Judæa's hostile ground,
The Lord His holy work of grace
Began in pity to our race, —
Preaching His glorious Gospel to the poor,
And ready all their griefs and woes to cure.

Alas! what conflicts He sustained!
What precious gifts those Jews disdained!
Help for the flesh they gladly used;
Help for the spirit they refused:
Subdued by Sin and Satan's dark control,
They would not suffer Him to save their soul.

At first, astonished by His power,
They hailed the long-expected hour
When their Messiah, David's Son,
Should occupy His father's throne;
When heathen Rome should be to ruin hurled,
And Judah's King should rule a subject world.

But when that favorite scheme was crossed,
And their ambition's hope was lost
By His rejection of the crown,
Their admiration soon cooled down:
The Pharisees their willing ear could gain,
And truth and mercy were proclaimed in vain.

Even the Apostles were impressed
With expectation, like the rest :
Although their faith, through grace divine,
Their hearts to love could still incline,
Taught by His heavenly wisdom day by day,
And guarded safely from the Tempter's sway.

But one amongst that honored band
Proved recreant to his Lord's command, —
Judas Iscariot, called to be
The wretched tool of treachery,
In strict accordance with prophetic lore,
Recorded by the Psalmist long before.

'Twas not because the traitor's sin
Constrained by Heaven's decree had been.
The Saviour read his venal heart,
Prepared to act the awful part ;
And thus foresaw his willingness to do
The deed which the prophetic pencil drew.

The Jewish priesthood, in the main,
Was held by Pharisees. To gain
The object of their fell despite
Against our Lord, they deemed it right
To have Him taken by commandment high,
Accused in form, and so condemned to die !

Attracted by the Saviour's fame,
Judas rejoiced to bear the name

Of an Apostle, in the hope
That such a service would give scope
For worldly profit through his Lord's control; —
That was the passion which absorbed his soul.

But soon he found his hope was vain,
Since Christ looked down with scorn on gain:
His benefits were given, not sold;
He wrought for love, and not for gold.
And so the wretch, who could not comprehend
His Master's motives, ceased to be His friend.

Thus, when he saw the favoring tide
Of public confidence subside,
While still against our Lord arose
The growing hatred of His foes,
He longed to change his course without delay,
And leave His service for a safer way.

The Pharisees, with fell intent,
The public officers had sent
To take the Saviour: but the deed
Was found too dangerous to succeed;
For still He held high influence o'er the throng,
And crowds might rise to shield Him from the
wrong.

And hence they deemed it would be best
To choose the night for his arrest;
For then the people would be gone,
And He might be secured alone,

If only they could know the spot where He,
With His small company, should chance to be.

For though He was the mighty Lord
Of heaven and earth, which by His word
Had been created, when He came
To bear our load of sin and shame,
He had no dwelling for His humble bed,
Nor home where He might rest His weary head.

The foxes to their holes could hie,
And to their nests the birds could fly ;
But He who made them by His might
Still wandered in the dews of night
From place to place, on mountain or in dell ;
And where to find Him no man could foretell.

Judas, from this, conceived the thought
That his foul treason might be bought.
Before the priests he went to lay
The plan by which he might betray
His Lord and Master at the midnight hour,
When none would question their official power.

His offer they received with joy,
And straightway hastened to employ
The sordid wretch, at whose demand
They placed their silver in his hand ;
And from that day he sought to find the mode
By which he might betray the Son of God.

And now the paschal feast drew near, —
That holiest time in all the year, —
When every faithful Jew was bound
To visit Zion's sacred ground,
And feed upon the lamb ordained by heaven, —
The type of Him by whom our sin's forgiven.

The Saviour in an upper room
To keep this holy feast had come.
His twelve Apostles, round their Lord,
With reverence listened to His word;
And, when He had performed the ancient rite,
He gave a new Memorial to their sight.

For, taking in his hand the bread,
Blessing and breaking it, He said,
"This is my Body, given for you:
Take it, and eat; and, as you do
This solemn action, let your spirits prove
That you remember all your Saviour's love."

And then the Cup of mingled wine
He blessed, and said, with look benign,
"Drink this, and be it understood
As the new Covenant in my Blood
Shed for you all. Of this, when you partake,
Do it in faithful memory for my sake."

O precious Sacrament! how high
The pledge of grace these words supply!

The gift which, under faith's control,
Assures salvation to the soul,
Secures our victory in each mortal strife,
And makes us meet for everlasting life!

This done, the Saviour fixed the doom
Of Judas. Though the time had come,
Predicted by the prophets, when
The Christ must die by wicked men,
Yet awful woe, by His Almighty Word,
Should seize the vile betrayer of his Lord.

Discovered by the power divine,
The traitor found his base design
Was fully known; but yet his heart,
So long possessed by Satan's art,
Was still resolved to execute his plan,
And thus complete the sin which he began.

Deluded by the Tempter's sway,
The hardened rebel went his way.
And then the Saviour to the rest
The solemn prophecy addressed:
"All ye, this night, on my account shall be
Offended; 'tis a part of Heaven's decree."

But Peter, strong in conscious love,
Presumed the saying to reprove;
And straight exclaimed, with inward pride,
"That cannot be to me applied:
Though all should be offended, yet my faith
Shall still be firm and loyal unto death."

Alas ! how weak and vain the boast !
How soon his confidence was lost !
“ I tell thee, Peter,” saith our Lord,
“ Before the cock crow — mark My word —
The Tempter shall to thee his art apply,
And thou three times thy Master shalt deny.”

But yet the rash Apostle took
No warning from this strong rebuke :
“ Though I should die with thee,” he cried,
“ Thou ne’er by me shalt be denied.”
How was he humbled when the trial came,
And filled his heart with sorrow and with shame !

Our pitying Lord had well divined
The leading sin of Peter’s mind :
Temptation’s power he must endure,
His proud self-confidence to cure ;
Thus by his fall he should be forced to feel
That Christ alone could give him strength and
zeal.

The paschal moon shone clear and bright,
As the disciples, by her light,
Led by the Saviour, took their way
Where a convenient garden lay :
’Twas called Gethsemane, and to its shade
Full many a visit had their Master made.

“ Here,” said our Lord, “ ye may remain
Till I shall come to you again.”

Then, taking Peter, James, and John
To watch while He should pray alone,
He felt His soul by inward grief oppressed,
And awful sadness weighed upon His breast.

But who His bitter woe can tell,
As on His face He prostrate fell,
And to the throne of God on high
Addressed His supplicating cry :
“O Father! if 'tis possible, I pray
- This cup of agony may pass away.”

What did He mean? Was it the fear
Of cruel death which now drew near?
Absurd to think so! All the woe
That men can suffer here below
Had been by martyrs borne with scarce a sigh;
And was the Son of God afraid to die?

O no! It was the burden laid
Upon His pure and holy head,—
The crimes of all mankind! He came
To bear our load of sin and shame:
Our surety and our substitute He stood,
That He might pay our ransom by His Blood.

And, when the hour had come to roll
This sea of guilt upon His soul,
He prayed in anguish. From each pore
Fell to the ground great drops of gore;
And all His sinless nature writhed to be
From that dire cup, if possible, set free!

It was not possible! The plan
Which God in love devised for man
Required that mercy's light should shine
Along with justice all divine!
Had Christ refused that burden to sustain,
His sacrifice would have been made in vain!

For 'tis the rule by justice set,
That when our surety pays our debt,
It must be counted for his own
By his consent, and that alone;
And hence, when Jesus was our Surety made,
Our debt of sin upon His head was laid.

But was His liberty constrained?
Not so! The glory which He gained
Was due to the obedience given
To the sublime designs of Heaven;
Though hours of suffering wore His fainting
frame,
Until, to strengthen Him, an angel came.

On the cold earth, in midnight air,
Thrice had He breathed His fervent prayer,
Bleeding in agony; yet still
He chose to do His Father's will.
O mystery of love! beyond all power
Of human praise was that transcendent hour!

The three disciples failed to keep
Their weary watch, and sunk to sleep:

Our Lord approached, and bade them rise;
 For Judas came to seek his prize,
 With soldiers, torches, weapons, all arrayed,
 That no attempt at rescue might be made.

The traitor had prepared the plan
 To designate the proper man :
 "The person whom I kiss," said he,
 "Must on the spot arrested be,
 Lest in the crowd and darkness of the night
 He should attempt to save himself by flight."

And so the wretch, with brazen face,
 Presumed the Saviour to embrace ;
 And said, "Hail, Master!" At the word,
 The soldiers moved to seize our Lord ;
 But He came forward with a stern demand,
 Which checked the ardor of the martial band :—

"Whom do ye seek with such parade?"
 "Jesus of Nazareth," they said.
 "I am the person," He replied,
 And straight their puny force defied ;
 For at His bidding, struck by sudden shock,
 Prostrate they fell as by a lightning-stroke.

Thus proving that their power and skill
 Could nought avail against His will,
 He gave Himself to be a prey
 Without remonstrance or delay :
 'Twas written that His blood should thus be shed,
 Even as the lamb is to the slaughter led.

But Peter, at his Master's word,
Had been provided with a sword ;
And rushing madly on the crowd,
With language passionate and loud,
Wounded the high-priest's servant by a blow,
Which cut the ear, and laid the caitiff low.

“Put up thy sword,” the Saviour cried :
“If force were fit to be applied,
A troop of angels would be given
At once, by the command of Heaven ;
But how should then the Scriptures be fulfilled ?
This is their hour, and willingly I yield.”

Thus saying, on the sufferer's head
Our Lord a gentle pressure laid.
That touch divine dispelled the pain :
The wounded man was whole again !
Then meekly turning to the wondering band,
He gave Himself a prisoner to their hand.

And what of His disciples ? All,
Lest danger might themselves befall,
Forsook their Master. He full well
Their timid prudence could foretell.
Even Peter, when his fit of boldness passed,
Forgot his boast, and fled away at last.

The Jewish Council met in state
To seal the great Redeemer's fate.

False witnesses before them stood
To legalize the work of blood.
Silent and calm, our Lord gave no reply :
He was not there to argue, but to die.

At length the high-priest, in the name
Of Him from whom creation came,
Adjured the Saviour to decide
The point to which their charge applied,
And say, in terms from all evasion free,
Whether the Son of God He claimed to be.

And He replied, with words of power,
"I am. At the appointed hour,
Ye shall behold me, placed on high
At God's right hand in majesty,
And coming in the clouds with heavenly might,
Glorious in victory, and robed in light."

"Rank blasphemy!" the priest exclaimed,
"As e'er by wicked lips was framed!
No further witness need appear :
We have His own confession here.
What think ye?" All, with one united breath,
Pronounced Him guilty, and deserving death.

But Peter, though, like all the rest,
He fled, through fear of an arrest,
Had followed to the palace gate
Where the assembled Council sate,
And with the servants entered to attend
The trial of his Lord, and see the end.

And here *his* trial now began.
Some recognized him as the man
Who had the Saviour's follower been,
And oft was in His service seen.
Three times thus challenged, Peter boldly lied,
And thrice his Master, even with oaths, denied.

The cock crowed loud! Alas! the crime
Was all complete within the time
Which Christ predicted. Guilt and shame
With keen remorse convulsed his frame;
And he went out to mourn with bitter tears
His base ingratitude and faithless fears.

And Judas! — how did he succeed?
The traitor had performed the deed
Of vilest perfidy against his Lord,
By every honest heart abhorred;
But soon his soul, by awful terrors torn,
Was forced to wish he never had been born.

For, when he heard the Saviour doomed,
His guilt its odious shape assumed.
Rushing where priests and elders stood,
He cried, "I have betrayed the blood
Of innocence!" — "See thou to that," they said:
"The plan was thine, the shame be on thy head."

Down on the ground, in wild despair,
He threw the silver pieces there,

And, urged by Satan, went alone
Into the field he hoped to own ;
Then round his neck the fatal noose he tied,
And thus the ruined wretch in horror died !

CANTO VI.

JERUSALEM no longer held a king ;
But all her citizens were forced to bring
A liberal tribute, at the stated hour,
In due submission to the Roman power,
Which ruled supreme. And Pilate was the man
To whom, according to their usual plan,
The right belonged, by his decisive breath,
To give the warrant for each culprit's death.

For Jacob's prophecy, through many years,
Had been fulfilled amidst the nation's tears :
The sceptre from great Judah's race had gone ;
No laws were framed by Jewish will alone ;
No monarch's voice was heard, for tyrant Rome
Their earthly sovereign had in truth become.
The high priest's council might condemn our
Lord,
But Pilate's voice must speak the final word ;
To him, however loath, they must apply ;
His lips could sentence Christ to live or die.

They bound the Saviour, and, without delay,
To Pilate's judgment-hall they took the way.
Two charges there against our Lord they brought:
First, that the dignity of King He sought,
And thus committed treason 'gainst the State;
Next, by the Jewish law, He earned the fate
Of a blasphemer, on the felon's tree,
Because the Son of God He claimed to be.

But Pilate long had known the Saviour's name;
His marvellous works, His doctrine, and His fame,
Were all familiar topics through the land,
Which few could wholly fail to understand.

The heathen Governor, moreover, knew
How Christ denounced the sanctimonious crew
Of Scribes and Pharisees; while they repaid
With bitter hatred all the truth He said.
And hence, believing that the charges rose
From envy of our Lord's malicious foes,
He wished to make their vengeful clamor cease,
And give their guiltless prisoner a release.

As on the seat of judgment he reclined,
This feeling gained new influence o'er his mind,
When he received a warning from his wife
To guard with careful heed the Saviour's life:
"Beware," she said, "that thou adopt no plan
Against that blameless, just, and righteous man
For I have suffered in a dream this day,
Lest He to malice should be made a prey."

But Christ Himself in silent patience stood,
While priests and elders thirsted for His blood,
He gazed on them with calm and pitying eye,
And to their wrathful words gave no reply.

It was the custom at the Paschal feast,
That one, in prison bound, should be released.
And so it was that, at this stated time,
Barabbas lay condemned for heinous crime :
A robber and a murderer was he,
Of whose deep guilt no question there could be.
To claim their right, the people took their stand,
And Pilate asked them whom they would
demand, —

Whether Barabbas or our Lord should draw
A full and free exemption from the law.

And yet, although it seemed to him their voice
Could never stoop to speak so vile a choice,
They took the robber, in their furious hate
Resolved to consummate the Saviour's fate ;
And when the Governor, in sad surprise,
Inquired what doom for Christ they would advise,
Excited by malicious rage, they cried
With clamor loud, "Let Him be crucified !"

The multitude in this demand were led
By the base lies which priests and elders said :
For they had worked, with every artful wile,
The people's thoughts and feelings to beguile ;

Persuading them most falsely to believe
That "Christ was Satan's agent to deceive
And ruin the whole nation; that the will
Of evil spirits gave Him all His skill
In doing wonders; while His words, in fine,
Were quite opposed to Moses' law divine;
And hence His death was just. No other plan
Could foil this enemy of God and man!"

Pilate was disappointed and perplexed:
One scheme had failed; but he would try the
next.

Hoping their hearts by reason might be won,
He asked the crowd what evil Christ had done.
Perhaps he meant them to recall the fact,
That, year by year, the Saviour's every act
Displayed His sympathy in all the woe
That suffering mortals can endure below;
And thus a change of feeling they might prove
From causeless enmity to grateful love.
But o'er their minds no influence he could
gain;

His just appeal was wholly made in vain:
In wilder passion than before they cried
With furious shouts, "Let Him be crucified!"

The Governor, alarmed, surveyed the crowd.
Their flashing eyes and imprecations loud
Gave warning that a tumult was at hand,
Which he had not the courage to withstand.

But still his conscience would not let him dare
In such a sacrifice to take a share ;
And as he felt that he must please the Jews,
Fearing their anger if he should refuse,
While yet he did not mean to say a word
In condemnation of our guiltless Lord,
He thought of an expedient to unite
The course of interest with the sense of right.

For water to be brought he gave a call ;
And then he washed his hands before them all,
These words pronouncing : " Innocent am I
Of this just person's blood. On you must lie
The guilt of shedding it." With willing speed
The maddened crowd to this at once agreed :
" Yea, let his blood," with one consent they
cried,
" On us and on our children still abide !"

Alas ! how little did those wretches know
That here they spake a prophecy of woe !
How little did they dream — by Satan led —
What curses they invoked upon their head !
And yet the Saviour warned them years before,
Predicting Israel's ruin o'er and o'er ;
But they disdained the lesson till too late,
And Heaven's long-threatened justice sealed their
fate.

The base and venal Governor, who held
That Christ was innocent, was yet impelled,

By coward fear, to treat our blessed Lord
As if He were condemned. For at his word
They scourged the Holy One, and gave release
That vile Barabbas might depart in peace ;
And then, the cup of cruelty to fill,
He yielded Jesus to the people's will.

The Saviour, bleeding from the scourge's blows,
Was now committed to His bitter foes.
His grievous pains with devilish glee to mock,
The soldiers made our Lord a laughing-stock ;
Compelled Him first a purple robe to wear ;
Next on His brows a crown of thorns to bear ;
Last, — that their sport might be completely
graced, —

A reed, for sceptre, in His hand they placed ;
And shouted, as they bent the suppliant knee,
"King of the Jews, all hail ! we bow to thee !"
Nor was this odious mummery the whole ;
For all the powers of darkness ruled their soul.
They smote Him with their hands, and with a rod ;
They even spit upon the Son of God !
And every form of malice had its sway,
Until they wearied of their horrid play.

O language fails, and thought cannot impart
The awful vileness of the human heart,
Displayed when faithless men rebellious prove
Against the gracious Lord of life and love !
'Tis wonderful that mortals, who can feel
For home and kindred such devoted zeal, —

Who know of warm affection all the power,
And weep with sympathy in sorrow's hour, —
Can yield themselves to hatred's dire control;
When pride and passion agitate the soul,
Be to the claims of mercy deaf and blind;
Cast pity and compassion to the wind;
For light put darkness, evil take for good;
Lay plans for cruelty, and thirst for blood;
Praise raging vengeance, meekness brand with
 shame,
And act like demons in fair Virtue's name!

But pass we on. The hour at length had come
When Jesus must prepare to meet His doom:
On His weak frame the heavy cross they lay,
And then to Calvary's hill pursue their way.
Sleepless and fasting, bleeding and in pain,
The load was greater than He could sustain.
Fainting, He sunk beneath it on the ground;
But soon a substitute the soldiers found, —
Simon, a stranger, whom they forced to bear
Part of a scene in which he had no share.

Vast was the crowd that followed to behold
The Son of God thus foully bought and sold.
The men derided, but the women wept;
And Jesus, who till then had silence kept,
Addressed the mourners, whose fast-falling tears
Bare witness to their sorrow and their fears:
"Ye daughters of Jerusalem," He said,
"Let not those gracious tears for Me be shed.

But for yourselves and for your children weep !
The days are coming when, with feelings deep
Of grief and anguish, this proud race shall call
The hills and mountains on their head to fall ;
When Heaven no more indulgence shall extend,
And wrath divine in judgment shall descend !”

They reach the hill of Calvary, and there
The awful work of sacrifice prepare.
Stripped of His raiment, on the Cross they lay
The Lamb of God, who takes our sins away.
Through hands and feet the cruel spikes are
driven,

While He, in torture, lifts His eyes to heaven ;
Content to suffer all His bitter pain,
In loving hope a ruined world to gain !
Now lifted up on the accursed tree,
Two thieves, His vile associates to be,
Are placed with mockery on either side ;
The priests and scribes His agony deride.
Their Victim with these taunting words they
brave :

“Others he saved, himself he cannot save !
He deemed that he was king o'er Israel's throne :
From this well-ordered Cross let Him come down,
And then we will believe Him. Even the Name
Of God's own Son His pride has dared to claim ;
Let the blasphemers feel, in death's dark hour,
How the Almighty vindicates His power.”
Hatred and insult thus inspire the voice
With which His frenzied enemies rejoice.

His scared disciples and the women stand
Amongst the crowd, the only faithful band;
Cast down, o'erwhelmed, the mournful scene they
view;

Their tongues are silent, but their hearts are
true.

The suffering Saviour, careful to fulfil
The prophecies dictated by His will,
Speaks from the cross: "I thirst;" and to His lips
A soldier lifts a sponge, which first he dips
In gall and vinegar. 'Twas in accord
With the plain statement of the Psalmist's word.

The thieves, who hung on crosses at His side,
Joined with the rest His sorrows to deride;
But one repented, and with censure strong
Reproved his base companion for the wrong.
Then to our Lord he turned his suppliant eye,
And sought forgiveness with an humble cry;
Nor sought in vain. "This day," saith Christ,
"with me

Thy pardoned soul in paradise shall be."
How strongly do those words of mercy prove
The gracious pity of the Saviour's love!

Close by the cross He saw His mother stand,
Held kindly by St. John's supporting hand:
Her feeble strength with grief was nearly spent,
But Jesus' thoughts were on her woe intent;
And, as His filial duty now was done,
He gently said, "Woman, behold thy son!"

Then to St. John He gave the word of power,
"Behold thy Mother!" From that very hour,
The loved disciple all her wants supplied,
And she on him with fullest trust relied.

A sign portentous in the heavens appears,
Which strikes the crowd with awe, and moves
their fears :

Behold! the sun, at his meridian height,
As if in sympathy, withdraws his light!
A strange and lurid darkness, like a pall,
Descends more thick than night upon them all.
For three long hours it mocks their straining
eyes,

And sinks each heart in terror and surprise;
Nor can they find relief from deep dismay
Until the dreadful gloom has passed away.

And now the Saviour's life was ebbing fast,
The end of torture drawing nigh at last;
When, sadly gazing on the murderous crowd,
For mercy and for grace He prayed aloud.
"Father, forgive them! Let not wrath pursue
Their grievous sin. They know not what they do."
O wondrous supplication! Glorious prayer!
What wealth of pity and of love was there!

One Scripture unaccomplished yet remained.
Death could not come while Deity maintained
The union with the manhood of our Lord,
Which formed His right to be by all adored.

In common mortals, nought can still the heart
 Until the soul from its frail shrine depart.
 But Christ possessed two Natures, One divine,
 And hence His life He could nowise resign
 Till Deity and Spirit both had gone,
 And left the fleshly tenement alone.

This shows the meaning of the Saviour's cry,
 "*Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani,*"
 Predicted by the Psalmist, and addressed
 To God, before our Lord could sink to rest.
 'Twas when the Deity forsook the man,
 That He might die, according to the plan
 Of wisdom infinite. And thus we reach
 The last of our divine Redeemer's speech;
 For "It is finished!" were the words He said,
 Before His spirit from the flesh had fled.
 His heart its beating ceased! He breathed no
 more!
 And all His bitter agony was o'er!

But did no proofs of majesty and power
 Attend the closing of that solemn hour?
 Did He, like others, draw His parting breath
 Without a prodigy to mark His death?
 Not so! As if the guilt of men to shame,
 All nature paid its tribute to His Name;
 And heaven and earth, the Temple and the
 grave,
 Proclaimed His Deity who died to save.

For, first, the noonday sun withdrew his light,
And wrapped the awful work in shades of night.
Next, in the Temple's shrine the solid veil
So thickly wrought, its glory to conceal,
Was, at the moment when His life was spent,
By hand unseen, from top to bottom rent;
Then was the ground by fearful earthquake
 moved,
The rending rocks its force and fury proved:
While from the sepulchres which round them
 lay,
The bodies of the saints, in open day,
After His resurrection, rose, His power to show
Whose death had conquered Death and all our
 woe.

The Jews were seized with terror and affright,
For none without alarm could view the sight;
And yet they were so prejudiced and blind,
That no conviction visited their mind.
But the centurion of the Roman band,
Whose duty called them round the Cross to stand,
Although he was a heathen, could perceive
The meaning of those wonders, and believe.
With honest heart the path of faith he trod,
And boldly said, "This was the Son of God!"

The soldiers, as their perquisite, took care
Of all the Saviour's garments; and the share
Which each should have apportioned for his own
Was fixed by lot, for which the dice were thrown.

And here, again, the Psalmist had full well
Displayed the power which taught him to foretell
In prophecy the facts that time should yield,
A thousand years before it was fulfilled.

The sacred Body of our Lord to save
From all irreverence, and provide a grave,
Joseph, a man of wealth and honest fame,
With prompt alacrity to Pilate came,
And gained the privilege, without delay,
The last sad service of the tomb to pay.
For he a costly sepulchre had made,
In which no mortal had as yet been laid ;
And well he had resolved, with faith and prayer,
To place those dear remains in safety there.

His true disciples from the Cross removed
The pallid corpse of Him they long had loved.
They washed the Blood away, with many a tear,
Caused by the cruel nails and soldier's spear ;
Wrapped it with care in linen pure and white,
The faithful women mourning at the sight :
And then, with sighs of sorrow for His doom,
They laid His body in the silent tomb ;
Rolled to the door a great and ponderous stone,
And left the lifeless form to rest alone.

Alone! Nay, not alone; for angels kept
Their guard of honor while the Saviour slept.
And Mary Magdalen, whose loving heart
Refused from her dear Master to depart,

Took, with the other Marias, on the ground,
A lowly seat. True sympathy they found,
In words with deep and earnest grief expressed,
Weeping together on each other's breast,
Until the watch, by Pilate set, had come,
And sent them sadly to their humble home.

But whither was our Lord's free spirit gone?
A troop of angels had in triumph flown
With Him to Paradise, — the happy place
Allotted for the righteous of our race, —
United to the Deity again,
No more to part, — o'er death and sin and pain
A glorious Conqueror! What tongue can tell?
What human voice the hymn of praise can swell,
Which filled the region with rejoicing meet,
While saints bowed down in transport at His feet!
To bliss like theirs no earthly mind can soar,
Though we, like them, may worship and adore.

The Saviour had full oft declared
The awful death for Him prepared,
That, through divine compassion, He
A Victim for lost man might be;
And He foretold, in terms precise and plain,
That on the third day He would rise again.

In strict fulfilment of His word,
The soul of our departed Lord
Returned from Paradise, and came
Again to animate his frame,

And in His glorious Person to combine
The twofold nature, human and divine.

An angel from the realms of light
Bent to the sepulchre his flight;
The ponderous stone, without delay,
Was rolled by his strong hand away;
While a great earthquake shook the solid ground,
And spread alarm and consternation round.

The heavenly messenger was clad
In radiant robes; serenely glad,
He took his seat upon the stone;
His countenance like lightning shone;
And all the Roman soldiers watching near,
Despite their courage, swooned away with fear.

But though it was the early dawn,
The faithful Maries had come on
To see the sepulchre, and prove
The deep devotion of their love.
To them the angel words of joy addressed:
"Fear not! I know the zeal which warms your
breast.

"You seek the Lord: but He is risen!
All power and might to Him are given:
He is the truth, the life, the way;
Come see the place wherein He lay,
That you to His disciples may impart
The blessed tidings which shall cheer their heart."

With throbbing pulse and beaming eye,
The women hastened to comply ;
But, as they went, the Saviour's voice
Caused them with transport to rejoice.
How dear the privilege His face to meet,
And be the first their risen Lord to greet !

They worshipped, bowing to the ground ;
Embraced His feet with love profound,
And by His own divine command
Informed the Apostolic band.
But as they feared the women were deceived,
The tidings were half doubted, half believed.

Meanwhile the watchmen told their tale :
The priests all heard, with faces pale,
How the angelic form its might
Displayed in their astonished sight ;
How they had fainted in a deadly swoon,
And, when recovered, found the body gone.

The priests, in sad and sore surprise,
Could think of no resource but lies.
They taught the soldiers what to say, —
That the disciples stole away
Their Master's corpse while they were fast asleep,
And gold was paid the secret well to keep.

The watchmen's word thus bought and sold,
The falsehood from that day was told ;

And few were found among the Jews
Who would to credit it refuse ;
Although upon its face the weak pretence
Seems contradictory to common sense.

For if the guard were not awake,
And therefore could no effort make
Against the bold disciples' crime
Because unconscious at the time,
How could they know by whom the act was done,
Or tell the means by which the corpse was gone?

Again, what motive could persuade
Those scared disciples to invade
The sepulchre, at risk of strife,
With loss of liberty or life ?
If Christ by fraud had led their minds astray,
Why should they take His dead remains away ?

And then from history we learn
That martial law was strict and stern ;
Amongst the Romans he was lost
Who dared to slumber at his post ;
But here the guard all slept both sound and long,
While not a man was punished for the wrong !

'Tis manifest, that, though this tale
Might with the Jewish race prevail,
It had no reason and no truth
Which should impose on age or youth.
Pilate's assent by priestly art was sought,
And liberal bribes the soldiers' conscience bought.

But on the evening of the day
When the Apostles met to pray,
And while the doors were shut, in fear
That some vile foe was hovering near,
The Saviour came, by love and mercy led,
And "Peace be unto you!" He kindly said.

Alarmed and troubled at the sight,
With pity He beheld their fright,
And full conviction soon supplied
By showing them His hands and side.
"Feel these," He said, "that you assured may be;
A spirit hath not flesh and bones like me."

With tears of joy they heard His word,
And touched the Person of their Lord,
In solemn awe and reverence meet,
Then fell adoring at His feet;
While He into their minds His truths instilled,
And taught them how the Scriptures were fulfilled.

Instructed thus, they clearly saw
The Psalms, the Prophets, and the Law
Were full of Christ; for, line by line,
He traced each ray of truth divine,
And showed them that His life, in every scene,
From first to last, had all predicted been.

Through forty days our Lord remained
On earth, and oft His word explained
As need required, until the end,
When to the heavens He should ascend;

And then He met them on the appointed day,
And led to favored Bethany their way.

But lest repentant Peter's claim
To bear a true Apostle's name
Might be disputed by the rest,
His gracious Master deemed it best
The full forgiveness of his sin to show,
And a new warrant for his work bestow.

To him, accordingly, a call
Was given in presence of them all;
Thrice questioned by our Lord, to prove
The strength and fervor of his love,
He answered thrice, and then was kindly told
To feed the sheep of the Redeemer's fold.

That the Apostles might release
From guilt, and grant the conscience peace,
The Saviour breathed upon their head
With majesty supreme, and said,
"Receive the Holy Ghost! To you 'tis given
To pardon sin, by grace derived from heaven.

"All power, both earthly and divine,
O'er the vast universe is mine;
As I am by my Father sent,
So send I you. On duty bent,
Trust for your wisdom and your strength to Me,
And you in your great work shall prospered be.

“Go then throughout the world, and preach
My Gospel. All the nations teach
The truth which you have learned to prize,
And young and old with care baptize
Into His name who rules the heavenly host, —
The triune Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

“My Church through you I will erect ;
No humble heart will I reject,
But every soul with faith supplied
Shall be accounted justified.
To faith which works by love with zeal attend,
And I am with you always to the end.”

As thus He spake, the Saviour spread
His hands in blessing o'er their head,
And straight ascended in their sight
To the celestial realms of light,
Thenceforth the seat at God's right hand to own,
In the full glory of His Father's throne.

But while the Apostles raised their eyes
In awful wonder to the skies,
Two angels, clothed in white, addressed
These words to sooth their troubled breast :
“Ye men of Galilee, why do ye gaze
Into the heavens with so much sad amaze ?

“This Saviour who on high has gone,
Since His great work on earth is done,
Shall come in majesty again,
With glory o'er the world to reign ;

And, though His Person for a time depart,
His Spirit will abide within your heart."

CANTO VII.

FROM the Ascension of our Lord,
Ten days appointed by His word
Elapsed, the better to prepare
The faithful band, by constant prayer
And humble hope, for the predicted hour,
Which should endue them with celestial power.

'Twas now that the proposal came
From Peter to select some name
Worthy to occupy the place
Which Judas left in foul disgrace.
Matthias took by vote the vacant seat,
And made the number Twelve again complete.

The Jewish law had well defined
That fifty days should be assigned,
After the holy Paschal feast;
The people then, from toil released,
Should celebrate the Pentecost with joy,
And one full week in pious praise employ.

This was the Heaven-appointed time,
When power, transcendent and sublime,
On the Apostles should descend,
Their work to prosper and defend;

For now the Church her new career began,
With the full grace which Christ bestowed on
man.

Assembled in the spot designed,
A rushing, strange, and mighty Wind
Seemed with a fearful force to sound,
And spread a shuddering awe around :
When lo! still greater wonder to inspire,
On the Apostles' heads flashed tongues of fire !

It was the Holy Ghost who came,
In glory visible, to frame
The course which they should all pursue.
What they should think, or say, or do,
Henceforth was to be guided from above,
In truth and wisdom, holiness and love.

With light divine their minds discerned ;
They preached in tongues they never learned :
The Jews from many a foreign land
Were all amazed to understand
How to these untaught fishermen was given
The power to speak each language under heaven.

Some fools profane there were who tried
This novel wonder to deride :
But Peter from the prophets showed
That 'twas the promised work of God ;
Thus proving how the Spirit gave to each
A new-born courage with the new-born speech.

For he who had, so late, in fear
Fled, when his Master's foes drew near,
And even with oaths denied Him, now,
With dauntless heart and lofty brow,
Stood boldly forth the people's act to blame,
And brand it as a deed of sin and shame.

How was his soul with ardor fired !
How with celestial strength inspired !
Inspired with knowledge, feeling, zeal,
Inspired all mysteries to reveal,
Inspired above the dread of death to rise,
And the fierce wrath of mortals to despise !

Nor was the Spirit's power confined
To changing the Apostles' mind ;
For thousands, at St. Peter's word,
Were pierced by sharp conviction's sword,
And cried aloud, with sorrow deep and true,
" O men and brethren ! say, what shall we do ? "

In words dictated from on high,
The preacher gave the prompt reply :
" Repent and be baptized. To all
Who hear the gracious Saviour's call
With contrite hearts submissive, shall be given
The Holy Ghost, the Comforter from heaven ! "

What were the fruits of this appeal ?
Three thousand answered it with zeal,
And were baptized — their pardon won —
Before the setting of the sun.

And thus the Spirit made His power appear
To mark with grace the Church's new career.

The gifts which in the Apostles shone
Had ne'er before that time been known
To such extent. The blind, the lame,
The sick of every age and name,
Were healed; and those by demon art possessed
Were all restored again to ease and rest.

But far more precious was the love
By which each faithful soul could prove
How prompt, to others, was his heart,
His aid and substance to impart.
Houses and lands were sold to feed the poor,
That none might poverty or want endure.

Thus did the Holy Spirit raise
The Church in honor and in praise
Within Jerusalem, so late
The agent in the Saviour's fate;
And the Apostles, prospered more and more,
Had constant cause to wonder and adore.

Before their feet the brethren laid
The generous gifts so freely made,
To be disposed of at their word:
While to the Church her gracious Lord
Led numbers who had been by sin enslaved,
And added daily such as should be saved.

Yet still the nation of the Jews
Could all this evidence refuse ;
Blind in their stubborn unbelief,
They saw the work with rage and grief ;
For Israel's hapless government was then
Controlled by Satan and by wicked men.

The bitter hatred which they showed
Against the holy Son of God
Was now by the Apostles shared ;
And hence the Council stood prepared
To check their prosperous and victorious course
By the strong hand of violence and force.

But first they deemed it best to try
If threats would serve to terrify ;
And when they found that measure fail,
They hoped that scourging might prevail.
Next came imprisonment, the end to gain,
And still their persecution was in vain.

For the Apostles, firm in will,
Their sacred mission to fulfil,
Continued to proclaim the Word,
And preach the Gospel, of their Lord.
Priests, lords, and Councils, all might hostile be,
But what should hinder the divine decree ?

Satan might keep his ancient sway
O'er rebels till the judgment-day,

And faithful men might yield their breath
In torture by a martyr's death ;
But yet the Saviour, with His own right hand,
Should guard His Church, and make His King-
dom stand.

The converts multiplied, until
'Twas found impossible to fill
The daily round of toil and care,
Without neglecting praise and prayer ;
Besides the duty laid upon them all, —
Sinners to warn and to repentance call.

More help was needed to secure
The distribution to the poor, —
A class of ministers, designed
Their temporal wants to bear in mind :
And so, that this result might be obtained,
Seven holy men as deacons were ordained.

The work advanced with growing power ;
The Church increased from hour to hour ;
The priests themselves repenting came
To honor the Redeemer's name :
But, though a portion owned His sovereign will,
The great majority were hostile still.

Amongst the deacons, Stephen shone.
The miracles which he had done
Converted many to the faith,
While others longed to work his death ;

But this they wished to compass by the force
Of Jewish law. It was their safest course.

According to their usual plan,
They brought the pure and zealous man
Before the Council, on the charge
That he talked blasphemy at large;
And, trusting thus his ruin to obtain,
They bribed false witnesses with hopes of gain.

But Stephen, strengthened and inspired,
His soul with holy ardor fired,
Rehearsed old Israel's career,
And made their rebel course appear;
Denounced their wicked murder of the Lord,
And roused their utmost fury by his word.

They gnashed their teeth like beasts of prey,
And dragged the faithful saint away,
And stoned their victim unto death;
While he, with his expiring breath,
Prayed, like his Master, to the King of heaven,
That their atrocious crime might be forgiven.

The first among the martyr band,
St. Stephen took his glorious stand.
And, through the slanders of his foes,
A bitter persecution rose,
That scattered the believers far and wide,
And proved the means by which they multiplied.

'Twas then the deacon Philip came
Down to Samaria to proclaim
The glorious Gospel, with the might
Of signs and wonders in their sight.
Gladly by multitudes the truth was prized,
And crowds of men and women were baptized.

Amongst the hosts of converts there
Was Simon, who, with magic rare,
Had long bewitched the people round
By arts of sorcery profound ;
But he, through faith in Philip's powers professed,
Had come to Christian baptism, like the rest.

There was a solemn rite ordained,
By which a blessing was obtained.
The Holy Spirit's power was shed
When an Apostle, on the head
Of the baptized, his hand with faith should lay,
And for that heavenly grace devoutly pray.

This sacred ordinance was the same
Which afterwards received the name
Of Confirmation. Philip knew
That it was to his converts due ;
And to the Mother Church, with joyful heart,
He hastened the glad tidings to impart.

Peter and John, without delay,
To do this service took their way ;

And Simon saw, with new surprise,
The Spirit's gifts of power arise
In every instance where the faithful soul
Was brought to the Apostles' kind control.

Thinking it was some secret skill
Which they could barter at their will, —
Like earthly science, bought and sold, —
He made them offer of his gold,
Ready a liberal price to pay, if he
Endowed with the same faculty might be.

With holy wrath, St. Peter cried,
"Thy money perish with thee! Pride
And false ambition move thy mind,
To selfish love of power inclined :
No part nor lot hast thou in Christian light,
Still unconverted in the Saviour's sight.

"In gall and bitterness, thy breast
Has yet no real faith confessed,
Else thou couldst ne'er have formed the thought
That God's free blessing could be bought.
Repent and pray! Perhaps the Lord of heaven
May grant that thy foul sin should be forgiven."

To this rebuke the sorcerer gave
An answer reverent and grave ;
But, though his words were smooth and fair,
He had no heart for faith or prayer :
On magic's art determined to depend,
He proved the Church's foe unto the end.

But now a convert was at hand,
In whom the Apostolic band
Should gain a partner, formed to shine
Above the rest in work divine.
The youthful Saul was chosen to fill the place,
By special call of the Redeemer's grace.

Trained by the Pharisees to hate
The Saviour, he approved His fate,
And that of martyred Stephen too,
As both to truth and justice due :
While to his hand the office was assigned
To seize on all the Christians he could find.

A persecutor he became,
And soon acquired a noted fame
For active zeal. But 'twas decreed
That he should gain a brighter meed, —
That power from God true wisdom should impart,
His mind illuminate, and change his heart.

While travelling on the public way,
He saw a light, in broad noontide,
Which far the blazing sun outshone,
And heard a voice, in thunder tone,
Proclaim from heaven the strange and awful
word,
“Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute the Lord?”

Fallen to the ground, and blind of sight,
He cried, all trembling with affright,

“Who art Thou, Lord?” The answer rung
With power from the celestial tongue :
“I am thy Saviour, Jesus. Let thy soul
No longer strive My mercy to control.

“Now rise, and on thy journey go ;
And in due season thou shalt know
Thy path of duty.” Filled with dread,
Saul, in submission, raised his head ;
But, wholly blind, was forced to make demand
That one should come and lead him by the hand.

For three long days, he took no share
Of meat or drink. In humble prayer
And bitter penitence the hours
Were passed, devoting all his powers
In faith to Christ, and longing to fulfil
Henceforth, till death, his heavenly Master’s will.

The Lord, who saw his true belief,
And looked with pity on his grief,
Sent Ananias to restore
The sight which he possessed before,
And tell him that his life should be employed
To preach the Gospel which he once destroyed.

And vast was the result attained.
The heathen by his zeal were gained
In multitudes. Afflictions sore,
The prison and the scourge, he bore ;
And Saul the persecutor won the fame
Which decks St. Paul, the great Apostle’s name !

But the advance, so haply made,
Was darkened by a passing shade ;
For soon a warm dispute arose,
Fomented by the Apostle's foes,
Whether the Gentiles, like the Jews, were bound
By all the rules in Moses' system found.

The ceremonial law was given
To Israel by command of Heaven ;
And Gentiles, as St. Paul maintained,
Were not designed to be constrained :
The moral law, 'twas true, exempted none ;
But all the rest was for the Jews alone.

Yet many in Jerusalem
Were prompt this doctrine to condemn.
There was no difference, in their view,
Between the Gentile and the Jew :
From faith in Christ no man his hope could
draw,
Till he was circumcised, and kept the law.

At length, the question to decide,
A course which could not be denied
Was taken at St. Paul's request,
Who each Apostle had addressed,
Desiring that a Council might be held,
And by their judgment every doubt dispelled.

They came together at this call, —
Apostles, elders, brethren, all ;

And, after much debate had passed,
Agreed harmoniously, at last,
That the position which St. Paul defined
Was in accordance with the Saviour's mind.

But yet the Council thought it good
To warn the Gentiles against blood,
And things that were by strangling slain,
Or offered at some idol fane ;
While fornication likewise they forbade, —
That favorite sin which men so oft betrayed.

Thus was this controversy closed :
But Christian truth was still opposed
By Satan's deep and subtle art,
Deluding many a simple heart ;
For schisms and heresies their work begun
Full long before the Apostles' course was run.

And yet, despite the Tempter's power,
The Church advanced from hour to hour.
The Jewish people were the root,
Which bore but little native fruit ;
While Gentiles, grafted in old Israel's place,
Grew rapidly in numbers and in grace.

The chosen nation had rebelled
Against the Son of God, and held
That duty bound them to disclaim
And execrate the Christian name.

With few exceptions, this describes them all:
They spurned His truth, and would not hear His
call.

But no such obstacles were found
To bar the faith on heathen ground.
The influence of the Spirit, there,
Brought crowds to penitence and prayer.
Then idols could not keep their ancient reign,
And Satan raged against the Church in vain.

The Saviour's bidding to perform,
With zeal sincere and feelings warm,
The chosen Apostles journeyed far,
And boldly waged their Master's war,
Beneath His banner, with His Spirit's sword,
Converting thousands by His mighty Word.

It was by early authors said,
That, ere they on their travels sped,
They felt, for order's sake, the need
Of fixing on a common creed;
And so, with one consent, agreed to frame
The form which has for ages borne their name.

But none of all that holy band
On such high eminence could stand
As did St. Paul. Through regions vast,
With fervent faith and zeal, he passed;
And still the glorious flag of Christ unfurled, —
The great Apostle of the Gentile world!

St. Peter had an older claim,
The first in Apostolic fame,
As he had first confessed the Lord,
And gained the promise, from His word,
That he the keys of Christ's new Church should
bear,
And give admittance to believers there.

At Pentecost, as God had willed,
This gracious promise was fulfilled ;
For then the Church was open thrown,
By Peter's voice, to Jews alone :
And he to Israel bore a leader's sway,
As Paul to Gentiles pointed out the way.

The faithful pair for thirty years
Of joys and trials, hopes and fears,
At length, as martyrs, thought it good
To seal their mission with their blood,
When tyrant Nero raised the cruel flame
Of persecution 'gainst the Christian name.

And ten years later came the fate
Of old Jerusalem, whose state
Of former grandeur passed away
In slaughter, ruin, and decay.
The Lord foretold the rebel city's doom,
And wept in sorrow o'er the wrath to come.

The Roman troops, by Titus led,
When every Jewish hope had fled,

Levelled their Temple to the ground,
And desolation spread around ;
But, warned in season by their Master's word,
The Christians 'scaped in safety from the sword.

The Mother-Church, first gathered there
By Apostolic faith and prayer,
Was thus preserved until the seed
Came forth of which the world had need ;
And then the judgment came which gave their
place,
In Christian history, to the Gentile race.

For all the promises of Heaven
To Abraham and his seed were given.
And hence, amongst her fiercest foes,
The Church in Israel arose ;
Her Lord, as man, direct from David's line,
And His Apostles, Jews, by law divine.

In old Jerusalem, St. James
Asserted the first Bishop's claims ;
Though called the Just, by Jewish hate
He had a Christian martyr's fate :
And fourteen other names, to history known,
Succeeded, ere the city was o'erthrown.

But, from that time, the sacred sway
Of Jewish Bishops passed away.
No Church of Israel's race appears
Through the long range of following years ;

For, when they fled, they scattered far and wide,
And were thenceforth with Gentiles classified.

And thus the ceremonial law
The old attention ceased to draw :
Since Jewish Christians met no more
In their own churches as before,
No zeal about the question could remain,
Which none were interested to maintain.

And now the doom, which long had been
By Israel's prophets all foreseen,
Came down. Compelled by Rome's decree,
The faithless Jews were forced to flee
Their native land, in foreign climes to roam,
Without a settled government or home.

The blood of Christ, so foully shed,
Rested in judgment on their head,
And on their children's ! Sore distressed, —
By kings and rulers still oppressed, —
They lived in odium, hated and disdained,
And so for seventeen centuries remained !

Yet they endured, by God's command,
Upheld by His almighty hand !
For 'tis decreed that they shall rise
When faith in Christ has oped their eyes ;
On David's throne the Saviour's face shall shine,
And Zion flourish by His power divine !

Do we not read the sacred word
Declared so plainly by our Lord,
That He that glorious seat shall fill,
While the Apostles, by His will,
On lower thrones their destined place shall gain,
And o'er the Tribes of Israel ever reign ?

The promises of Heaven are sure.
Though still dispersed, the Jews endure, —
God's chosen people! Honored name!
What other nation boasts their fame ?
Raised up to teach mankind, by their career,
His love to covet, and His wrath to fear ?

'Tis true that, for their grievous sin,
Cut off from Christ the Jews have been ;
True, to the Gentile Church are given
The gracious promises of Heaven :
And hence this Church, through ancient Israel's
doom,
The Lord's elected Israel has become.

The natural branches broken lie :
The root itself can never die !
The faithful Gentiles fill the place
Once granted to the Jewish race ;
But the Apostle Paul, in language plain,
Predicts that God will graft them in again.

When Christ, who sits at His right hand,
Shall come to rule with full command

Upon His high millennial throne,
And claim all nations as His own,
The Jews their offering of faith shall bring,
And hail Him as their Saviour and their King.

“ All Israel shall be saved ! ” That word
Is from the Spirit of the Lord !
Old Canaan’s soil shall yet be found
A holy, consecrated ground ;
And from Jerusalem the streams shall flow
Of peace and mercy to the world below !

And now the history of the Church we’ve traced
So far as the materials were supplied,
Noting those facts which sacred Scripture placed
Before our eyes as an unerring guide.

Of what remains, we must proceed with care
From other books our knowledge to obtain.
’Tis true, we find no Inspiration there ;
But they are just and faithful in the main.

The progress of the Church through ages past ;
Her conquests, sufferings, zeal, and power for good ;
Her champions and her foes from first to last ;
Her holy martyrs sanctified in blood ;

Her grievous errors, wandering from the path
Of apostolic truth and doctrine pure ;
Her influence, upheld by force and wrath
Till Christ’s indulgence could no more endure ;—

All this, narrated in precise detail,
Would form a work too large for men to read:
To youth or age the task would nought avail,
Nor would the toil of writing it succeed.

But we shall briefly treat the leading facts,
The names made famous in the days of yore,
The persecutions and despotic acts,
The superstitions, growing more and more,

Until, at length, the voice of bold reform
Assailed the tyranny of papal sway,
And, armed with faith and zeal sincere and
warm,
Swept the false claims of priestly pride away.

This will suffice to show the Church designed
By Christ's command to the Apostles given,
Impress the heart to sacred truth inclined,
And aid the faithful in the way to heaven.





HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

PART III.

CANTO I.

THE Church is Christ's own kingdom upon earth,
And in its primal form it had its birth
When sacrifice was ordered, after all
The hopes of man were lost by Adam's fall :
For God then promised, by His mercy led,
That Eve's great Son should bruise the Serpent's
head ;

While he, the Serpent, should his power reveal
In bruising with vain wrath her Offspring's heel.

That Seed was Christ; the Serpent was His foe,
Satan, the source of sin and all our woe.
The bruising of the Serpent's head implied
The Saviour's conquest o'er his power and pride.
The heel of Christ, bruised by the demon's skill,
Described His cruel pain on Calvary's hill :

For, while the thieves upon the cross were tied,
His feet were bruised with nails until He died.
Thus sacrifice, by law divine, began
To keep before the mind of fallen man
The Victim promised at the future day, —
The Lamb of God, who takes our sins away !

This, doubtless, was by Abel understood ;
While Cain, the first who shed a brother's blood,
Rejected in his unbelieving heart
The hope which Heaven in mercy would impart.
For Abel brought his sacrifice in faith, —
The lamb which was the type of Jesus' death ;
And hence the favor shown, by which the Lord
Blessed the obedience rendered to His Word.

The Church this first and simple form retained
Till Abraham's zeal a new appointment gained.
The rite of circumcision now took place,
To seal the covenant of heavenly grace :
But the great change for Israel's Church designed,
Decreed by the Almighty's sovereign mind,
To the Redeemer's work of mercy bore
Far closer reference than aught before.

'Twas in that Church the Lord of glory came
To mould His kingdom to a brighter frame ;
'Twas in that Church His twelve Apostles
wrought
To raise the standard of religious thought :
And from that Church the world was now to prove
The spreading influence of the Saviour's love.

And hence it is quite easy to conceive
 What deep impress that ancient Church would
 leave

On its successor. In the clergy's school,
 The High-priest, Priests, and Levites formed a
 rule,

From which, the Holy Spirit being guide,
 The Bishop, Priests, and Deacons were supplied
 By the inspired Apostles. Hence the mode
 Of worship, which for ages held abode

In Jewish synagogues, by forms of prayer,
 Would in the Church a due preponderance bear.

Hence, too, the Psalms of David were retained,
 The lessons read from Scripture still remained ;
 And when the Church, from persecution free,

Could act upon her own unforced decree,
 Her priests in linen surplice were arrayed,

In likeness of the Jewish ephod made :

While every sacred edifice pursued

The Temple, which of yore so glorious stood,

As the best model for the Christians' art,

From which they would not needlessly depart.

And was not this the best and safest way ?

The Jewish Church deserved to bear the sway,

Because it came, in each important line,

From God, with power and sanctity divine :

And those who rashly sought to change His plan

Must think the Deity less wise than man.

Some difference, doubtless, every mind can see,

In which the old and new could not agree :

And here the Acts of the Apostles show
All that the Christian seeker needs to know.
But where there was no reason for a change,
The bold assumption which would re-arrange
What once was settled by divine control
Should be rejected by the faithful soul.

CANTO II.

THE ancient writers all relate
That the Apostles met the fate
Of martyrs, saving one alone,
The great Evangelist, St. John;
And he, worn down by age and toil,
Was plunged alive in boiling oil,
From which he issued safe and well,
The miracle of grace to tell.
To Patmos' isle in exile sent,
His time in sacred labors spent
The Holy Spirit cleared his sight,
Those wondrous visions, dark and bright,
By special favor to behold,
And all the great events unfold,
Which in his "Revelation" shine
With light mysterious and divine.
But he in time obtained release
From banishment, and died in peace;
While his last breath was spent to prove
The happy fruits of Christian love.

The first great century had run
Its marvellous course. The next begun
With persecution's bitter strife
'Gainst Christian liberty and life.
The Bishop of old Antioch, named
Ignatius, for his virtues famed,
And for his sanctity well known,
Was now, by Trajan's edict, thrown
To raging lions. But his faith
So triumphed o'er the pains of death,
That even his foes were converts made,
When he his holy zeal displayed
In praising God that he should bear
The glory of a martyr there.

The faithful scholar of St. John,
The famous Polycarp, came on
Full soon. A Bishop too was he,
Of Smyrna, who rejoiced to be
Appointed by his Master's word
To die a martyr for the Lord.
And so he perished in the flame,
In honor of the Saviour's name.

The ancient town of Lyons stood
Distinguished, in those days of blood,
When persecution's furious course
Raged through the land with cruel force.
There also did the Bishop die!
Though many a Christian prayer on high
Ascended to the heavenly throne

To stay the blow. His willing heart
Was well prepared to take its part.
The Lord His strengthening grace sent down
To fit him for the martyr's crown,
That Irenæus' name might stand
With glory midst the sacred band.

But it were tedious to rehearse
Each special case in homely verse.
It may suffice in brief to state
The general features of their fate.

Throughout the first three hundred years,
The force of heathen hate appears
In ten fierce persecutions, waged
Against the Church. For Satan raged
Through human passions. Every art
Which fiendish malice could impart
To agonize the martyrs' frame,
And brand their death with scorn and shame,
Was summoned by despotic will,
And practised with demoniac skill.
Their flesh on burning coals was laid;
Their bodies were in sacks arrayed,
All smeared with pitch, and set on fire,
And, dragged through pools of blood and mire,
To the wild beasts in circus thrown;
Racked on the wheel in dungeon lone;
Chained to the stake, while flames arise,
And trumpets sound to drown their cries;

Torn with the red-hot pincers ; pressed
With weights upon their panting breast ;
Hung upon crosses in the way,
To blister in the blaze of day ;—
All these most devilish means were tried,
In hope that Christ might be denied.
All these the martyrs could sustain,
And pagan malice toiled in vain !

But some there were among their foes,
Who, in a milder temper, chose
Those cruel measures to abjure,
And take another mode of cure.
By such the Christians oft were sent
As exiles into banishment,
Or doomed with felon slaves to join
In the hard labor of the mine :
While confiscation made their fate
A source of profit to the State,
And moderate scourging, plied with skill,
Was used to bend their stubborn will.

Thus forced to see from time to time
How faith was punished as a crime,
It is not strange that many proved
Disloyal to the truth they loved.
Like Peter, boastful in his pride,
Who yet his gracious Lord denied !
When danger's frowning face drew near,
And Satan filled his breast with fear ;

Though deep within his soul, his will
Was constant to his Saviour still :
And hence, when the temptation passed,
He wept in penitence at last.
Even so, those weak disciples failed
While persecution's power prevailed.
To save their lives, they played a part,
Professed a lie with trembling heart ;
And then, when peril's hour was o'er,
Werè found believers as before.

But those whose weakness could not stand
The day of trial, bore the brand
Of heavy censure. None could win
Indulgence for such flagrant sin.
The Church repelled them: though, for years,
They sought, with humble prayers and tears,
Their former station to regain,
Yet prayers and tears alike were vain.
'Twas only at the end, when death
Drew near to claim their parting breath,
That the communion could be given
To cheer them with the hope of Heaven.

Yet one excepted case was found.
When those who bravely held their ground
Resolved, in spite of pain and shame,
To bear the holy martyr's name,
Pitied their weaker brethren's grief,
Anxious to give their woe relief,

And so, by their own written word,
Requested they might be restored.
The martyrs' prayer possessed such sway,
That discipline at once gave way.
'Twas hard such sinners to receive ;
But it was harder still to grieve
Those self-devoted saints who stood
Prepared, for Christ, to shed their blood.

At first, these cases were but few ;
Though, in the course of time, they grew
So numerous, that the Church no more
Could tolerate them as before.
Yet not because the martyr's crown
Had lost in brightness or renown :
Far otherwise ! As time advanced,
Their praise and honor were enhanced.
In every year, one solemn day
Was given to each, in fond display
Of the more eminent, whose name
Was marked upon the roll of fame.
'Twas held, and commonly believed,
That every martyr was received
In the third heaven, with joy to share
The glory of the Saviour there.
And so the tide of reverence ran,
Till men to worship them began !

'Twas neither wrong nor strange to raise
A tribute to the martyrs' praise.

They were the great heroic band,
 Placed, by our blest Redeemer's hand,
 Full in the world's astonished sight,
 To give their life for truth and right;
 Defying, to their latest breath,
 The direst forms of cruel death :
 While thousands in amaze looked on,
 And saw the Gospel's victory won,
 And felt that nought but Power on high
 Could teach the faithful thus to die.
 'Twas by their blood the seed was sown
 From which the Saviour's Church had grown ;
 The death of Christ prepared the road
 To lead each contrite soul to God :
 The martyrs' deaths to truth inclined
 A pagan host from all mankind.
 Most other miracles might be
 Ascribed to Magic's agency ;
 But this possessed a higher art,
 To reach the feelings of the heart.

The martyrs, therefore, had a claim
 Most worthy of their Christian fame ;
 And their memorial on the page
 Of history may well engage
 Our grateful reverence. But the skill
 Of Satan turned the good to ill,
 When Superstition's folly led
 The Church to deify the dead ;
 Ascribing to each mouldering bone
 The power which rests in God alone ;

Supposing that their relics gave
A respite from the yawning grave ;
Adorning them in costly shrine,
With silver, gold, and gems to shine,
As if they could accomplish more
Than living saints had done before !

And next the lying spirit taught
That to the martyrs should be brought —
As subject to their high control —
The wants and wishes of the soul ;
Seeking their aid in humble prayer,
To guard from every earthly snare ;
Placing each region in their hand,
As ruling powers in every land :
St. James, protector of old Spain ;
St. Denis, over France to reign ;
St. George, defending England's throne !
Nay, to such wide extent had grown
This strong delusion, that it ran
Through all the varied life of man.
The baptized child received its name
From some dead saint, who straight became
Its special patron and its friend
Till all its mortal cares should end ;
The lovers sought their hands to join
With prayers to kind St. Valentine ;
The English soldier in the fray
Invoked St. George to win the day ;
While power above them all was given
To Mary, called the Queen of Heaven :

Her praise was heard from every tongue
Of male and female, old and young ;
And her fond worship made a part
Of spurious faith in every heart.

But these sad errors could not gain
The slightest force the Church to stain
Till heathen persecution ceased.
'Twas then, from fears and pains released,
That Christians saw the Saviour's name
Supreme in honor and in fame.
Three hundred years in conflict passed,
The Cross triumphant proved at last :
The Emperor Constantine was led
To bow in faith his royal head.
The idol altars smoked no more
In sacrifice with human gore :
The pagan priests, compelled to yield,
With shame and odium quit the field ;
And, through the world, the Church could raise
In grateful joy the shout of praise.

CANTO III.

THE rage of Satan, foiled by Heaven's decree,
No longer worked through persecution's sway :
The Church was now from pagan hatred free,
And soon the martyr-spirit died away.

Her subtle adversary saw his host
Of idol gods and goddesses cast down :
Their shrines in ruin to the winds were tossed,
And no one cared their images to crown.

And hence his policy he must arrange,
To dress idolatry with better art ;
Seduce the Church to sanctify the change,
And thus allure the simple Christian heart.

Imperial influence brought a motley crowd
To pay their hollow homage to the Lord :
Their new-born zeal was active, bold, and loud,
But governed mainly by the monarch's word.

The post of Bishop took a lordly aim,
That secular ambition well might crave ;
And worldly politicians urged a claim
Which Christian faith and labor never gave.

And hence the sacred office oft was filled
By men of mere expediency, whose mind,
To God's pure Spirit quite untaught to yield,
Was still to heathen vanities inclined.

Those Bishops multiplied as time rolled on,
And hosts of heathen, half converted, came
To boast the victory by the Gospel won,
And wear, for fashion's sake, the Christian name.

And soon the Church's ancient glory ceased ;
The word of Truth was mixed with pagan lore ;
While superstition, pomp, and show increased,
And simple piety was prized no more.

In the fourth century the change began,
But did not touch the doctrines of the Creed :
Three centuries more their downward courses ran
Ere Satan's subtle arts could quite succeed.

For still, though wealth and power and priestly
 pride
And superstition held increasing sway,
The Lord His Church with some true hearts sup-
 plied,
Who toiled with zeal to keep the better way.

The holy Jerome, presbyter of Rome,
Loathing the worldly lusts that flourished there,
To Bethlehem advised his friends to come,
Amongst the monks, for labor and for prayer.

A Bishop through the Church most widely
 known,
The famed Augustin, left on many a page
His strong rebukes of the corruption grown
To such a height in that degenerate age.

Another Bishop, Basil, called the Great,
Reproving the dissensions of his day,
Bewailed the Church's sad declining state,
Which led so many from the faith to stray.

Chrysostom too, the eloquent and good,
And Salvian, Bishops both, by zeal inspired,
In the next age the same sad task pursued,
Lamenting that the times such work required.

Here was the moving cause why monkery grew
From the fourth century to such control :
The system was unnatural and new,
But gave a refuge to the pious soul.

For in monastic life they laid aside
The worldly lusts by which the Church was
pressed :
No room they gave to vanity and pride,
But in devotion sought for peace and rest.

Their food was simple, and their garments plain ;
Their fasts were frequent, and their feasts were
few :
They lived in common, and no private gain
To any single member could accrue.

Each labored for the whole with equal zeal,
While one was chosen governor and guide :
The faith and love which Christian hearts should
feel
The motives to obedience well supplied.

Seven times each day and night they met for
prayer ;
None but religious books were ever read ;
And, though no wasteful luxury was there,
The way-worn traveller was kindly fed.

With peace and love their duty to discharge,
They banished discord, clamor, noise, and strife ;
And all their course seemed fitted to enlarge
The gentle virtues of the Christian life.

It was no wonder that a plan so pure
Was hailed by many with admiring eyes :
Throughout the Church its sacred aim was sure
To draw attention, and excite surprise.

It was so new, its object so sublime,
Its means so simple, and its power so vast
To heal the sad disorders of the time,
And lead the way to genuine faith at last,

All pious men their cordial welcome gave ;
The Bishops lent it their official sway,
Believing it the only mode to save
The Church of Christ from ruin and decay.

They praised it as the life of angels! True,
In some respects their judgment was correct ;
But monks were men, not angels, to pursue
A scheme which Nature's laws would fain reject.

For God, the great Creator, had declared
That man in solitude should not abide ;
And hence, in love and wisdom, He prepared
The woman, formed from sleeping Adam's side.

The marriage made by His Almighty hand
 In Paradise, with power so great and high,
 Was followed by the absolute command
 Which bade them to increase and multiply.

But Satan in his subtlety had led
 The Church to recommend a single life,
 False glory round virginity to shed,
 And shun the risk of matrimonial strife.

Well knowing that the Lord himself had made
 Wedlock the type in which, by faith, was seen
 His union with the Church, the Tempter said
 With bold effrontery, "It is unclean!"

Yet the Apostle, who alone advised
 Virginity as best in troublous days,
 Expressly showed how high his judgment prized
 The state of marriage as a theme of praise.

"Marriage is honorable 'mongst all men,"
 So spake St. Paul by inspiration true :
 "Let every man have his own wife," and then
 "Let every woman have her husband" too.

These texts might well suffice to prove the case :
 Yet one remains which may complete our store ;
 Where Bishops are enjoined to fill the place
 Of husbands and of fathers. Need we more ?

How grievous, then, the error should be held,
To which the Church was led by Satan's art,
When virgins, monks, and priests were thus im-
pelled
By stringent vows from marriage to depart!

The God of nature is the God of grace:
The law of Paradise is Heaven's decree;
And it has been the Church's foul disgrace
To think its breach could help her sanctity.

This was the sin of Monkery. The plan
Required that wedlock should be quite abjured:
Man only was allowed to mix with man,
That thus the faith might better be secured.

And in due time the weaker sex was placed
In like position. Then, on every side,
Widows and virgins zealously embraced
The rule which Satan's cunning had supplied;

For he, the father of deceit and lies,
By this invention led the Church astray;
Taught men the state of wedlock to despise,
And boast their plan as the far better way.

The monks and nuns were soon raised up on high
As "the religious." Every married priest
Was now regarded with an evil eye,
And deemed unfit to spread the Gospel feast.

The monastery was the favorite school
In which the Church's ministry was trained ;
And in due time they passed a stringent rule,
That men in wedlock should not be ordained.

The faith of Christ laid down for every soul
The strait and narrow path which leads to
heaven ;
The priest and layman owned the same control :
The law divine to both alike was given.

For both, the common powers of man possess, —
Their wants, desires, and passions are the same :
The Lord has promised both alike to bless,
And in His Book of Life to write their name.

But now two paths appeared instead of one :
The laity might marry at their will ;
But priests must bid connubial love begone,
And deem it fruitful, not of good, but ill.

To laymen 'twas a sacrament of grace
By which a blessing to the soul was given ;
To priests it was a shame and a disgrace,
A grievous sin which barred the way to heaven.

And monks and nuns, although they had no
claim
To priestly honor, yet by vow were bound
To lead a single life, and shun the name
Of parent. Thus the Tempter held his ground.

And the result was mournful. When the road
 Which God had sanctioned was blocked up by
 man,
 The natural passions found their vile abode
 In vicious ways which soon to ruin ran.

The records of succeeding ages prove
 How spurious sanctity became unclean;
 Forbidden to indulge in wedded love,
 They trod the foulest paths of lust and sin.

Yet several centuries were required to show
 The dark corruption which the Church deplored;
 When she by sad experience learned to know
 The guilt and woe of wandering from the Lord.

CANTO IV.

THE next great subject of survey
 Which Church historians all display
 Involves the fundamental change
 Of discipline. The varied range
 Of innovation, authorized amiss,
 Presents few faults more blamable than this.

The kingdom, or the realm, of heaven,
 Is the high name which Christ has given
 To be the Church's title. None
 But Apostolic hands alone
 Received the keys by which the sinner's soul
 Could come or go, through their inspired control.

In baptism they unlocked the door
The pardoned rebel to restore;
And if by grievous guilt again
He stooped his Christian robe to stain,
They shut him out, his load of grief to bear,
Until his penitence was proved sincere.

But by the great Apostle's will
This discipline was open still;
No secret sentence e'er could be
Traced to their sacred ministry:
Before the faithful every act was done,
And thus the public confidence was won.

Hence, from St. Paul's injunction laid
On Timothy (the Bishop made
Of ancient Ephesus), we learn
This rule of duty to discern:
"Let those who sin," saith he, "their sentence
hear
Before the whole, that others, too, may fear."

The Church for several centuries held
The rule. The sinner was repelled
From the communion, for a time
Proportioned justly to his crime;
And all the congregation joined to blame
The act which called for the offender's shame.

The Bishop was the judge. He bore
The office given by Christ before

To the Apostles; but his word
Was bound to be in full accord
With Scripture, and pronounced in public sight,
That all should bear their witness to the right.

Thus stood the matter till the day
Of persecution passed away,
And wealth, prosperity, and pride
Began to draw the Church aside,
That she the feelings of the great might spare,
And make her yoke an easy one to bear.

With this intent, the sacred rule
Laid down in the Apostle's school
Was so relaxed, that sin could be
Reproved with perfect privacy.
The priests in secret all the burden bore,
And public discipline was known no more.

Auricular confession, then,
Was a relief to guilty men.
No longer were the Bishops bound
In public their rebuke to sound;
And the old laws of penitence became
The empty shadow of their ancient fame.

And now another change began,
Which soon to serious error ran.
The Scriptures had expressly taught
That every soul at death was brought
Into the world of spirits, there to know
The foretaste of the future joy or woe.

This was the intermediate state
To which so many texts relate ;
Held, doubtless, in the ancient day
Of Noah's patriarchal sway,
And hence derived to every heathen clime
Through all the round of circumstance and time.

But Plato, the famed Grecian sage,
Had, in his philosophic page,
Maintained that each departed soul
Was placed beneath a fixed control,
Which purged it from the stains of mortal birth,
And cleansed away the passions felt on earth.

And many converts from the school
Of Plato now began to rule
The Church, with philosophic mind
To their old system still inclined.
This was the source whence Purgatory came
To wear the honor of the Christian name.

Once introduced, the notion grew
Into a dogma strange and new.
A monk, in visions of the night,
Beheld a lamentable sight, —
The souls in Purgatory plunged in grief,
Tortured with flames, and groaning for relief.

Their countenance appeared the same,
For some he knew, and called by name ;
And, as he saw them scorched with fire,
He felt, of course, a strong desire

To learn what could be done to ease their pain,
And give them pardon, rest, and peace again.

Then he was told that every sin
Which had on earth committed been
Brought down its penalty of woe,
Which must be suffered here below.
'Twas true, believers would be saved at last,
But not till all this misery was past.

To saints and martyrs it was given
By special grace to enter heaven
Without this purgatorial flame ;
But all the rest, whate'er their fame
For zeal and piety on earth might be,
Must feel the cleansing fire by God's decree.

The only way relief to gain,
And shorten their sad term of pain,
Was through the Church which held the keys
Of heaven. And hence, to give them ease,
The prayers and Masses of the priest must prove
The true resource of faithful Christian love.

In fine, the monk was strictly told
This wondrous vision to unfold.
Obedient to the high command,
He published it on every hand :
Throughout the Church, the tale like wildfire ran,
And priests to claim their novel powers began.

But strange it seems that none were found
 The evidence with care to sound :
 The Scriptures might be searched in vain,
 No proof of this did they contain ;
 Nor did the early Church of Christ require
 The slightest faith in purgatorial fire.

It was a monkish dream, — no more, —
 Based on the heathen Plato's lore ;
 But yet the priesthood, one and all,
 Received it as a sacred call :
 Though earth supplied more work than they
 could do,
 Their zeal embraced the world of spirits too.

For there were reasons of great force
 In favor of this novel course :
 It raised the priests' importance high,
 That they had power to modify
 The state of souls by sin to torment driven,
 Relieve their pains, and send them safe to heaven !

And, next, it was a work well paid ;
 A daily Mass could soon be said :
 And, when its object was to save
 From countless woes beyond the grave,
 Who could refuse their gold with joy to spend,
 In order to secure that blessed end ?

But here was a peculiar fact :
 The efficacy of the act

Depended on the faith and zeal
Which relatives or friends might feel
Displayed in gold, — the most convincing plan
To prove sincerity since time began!

The priest could win the humble poor
To Christ, and ope the Church's door,
And give the sacrament for nought,
Since God's free grace could not be bought.
But Purgatory stood on different ground:
Without the gold, the soul continued bound.

Another reason may appear
To make the dogma's merits clear;
Though prayers and Masses all might fail,
No soul could come to tell the tale;
And, if the suffering spirit was released,
It was a secret even to the priest.

From this a benefit would grow:
As no man the result could know,
The safest method to pursue
Was still the work again to do.
Some prayers and Masses might be thrown away,
And yet a hundred more might win the day!

This argument was strong and plain.
Hence, lest their spirits should remain
Too long in fiery woe to grieve,
The men of wealth were taught to leave
A legacy by Will, to buy a store
Of Masses for a thousand years or more.

For all these reasons, 'twas decreed
That this new dogma must succeed.
The priests proclaimed it far and wide,
And none the evidence denied;
Since, though its truth no valid proof could show,
It brought vast treasures to the Church below!

CANTO V.

THE kingdom of our Lord was planned
By the inspired and chosen band
Of His Apostles, who were led
In all things by their glorious Head,
That they might make His Gospel shine
Through form of Government divine.

Yet no one dreams that the control
Of Government can save the soul!
That is the work of faith alone
In Him whose sufferings atone
For sin, while He by grace imparts
The Spirit's power to change our hearts.

This truth affords no room for strife,
That faith must be the Church's life.
"But it is called Christ's Kingdom." True;
And it is styled "His Body," too.
By either phrase, it is confessed
That outward form is well expressed.

If 'tis the kingdom of the Lord,
It must be governed by His Word
Through officers ordained to see
That all obey their King's decree.
If 'tis His Body, it must bear
The form assigned it by His care.
No kingdom that was ever planned,
Without a government, can stand.
No Body from its Maker came
Without its due appointed frame.

On earth the law is understood :
Its breach is oft avenged in blood !
The man who dares, with reckless pride,
To set his Government aside,
And tries, despite his threatened fate,
To revolutionize the State,
Is called a traitor, and his name
Is branded with reproach and shame.
Nay, 'tis the rule from olden time,
That death shall wait upon his crime.

And can it e'er be just or right
In our divine Redeemer's sight,
His kingdom's Government with eyes
Of scorn or odium to despise ?
Shall treason 'gainst an earthly lord
Incur the halter or the sword,
And shall the rebel 'scape the rod
Who rises 'gainst the Church of God ?

But, in the changes of our earth,
That which was treason at its birth
Assumes a grand and glorious air
When victory plants its laurels there.
The name of rebel leaves no trace :
The conquering hero takes its place.
And he who, if he failed, should have
His judgment in a felon's grave,
Crowned by success shall end his days,
Amidst the shouts of human praise.

And so, in what belongs to heaven,
Mankind in every age are given
To make success the only test
Of God's approval. They are blest
Who prosper! But it is not true,
Save when the course which they pursue
Is in accordance with His word :
For, in this evil world, the Lord
Permits success full oft to wait
On plans of wrong, and deeds of hate ;
Though in the end, when Christ shall come,
The wicked must receive their doom,
And, while successful in the past,
Shall fail eternally at last !

Success alone can therefore prove
No sign of blessing from above ;
For, since the time of Adam's sin,
The world at large has always been
Ruled by the power to Satan given,
The spirit who rebelled in heaven ;

And God decreed that man should know,
By sad experience, all the woe
Which waits on sin, however great
Success may seem in Church or State.

And hence no mortal can rely
On this his acts to sanctify.
Success attended on the art
Of Satan, when, in every part
Of earth, idolatry held sway,
And triumphed in old Abram's day.
Success was gained by heathen might
When Israel, conquered in the fight,
Was forced to leave their native land,
As captives to a pagan band.
Success gave influence to the sword
Which won for false Mohammed's word
Throughout the East a splendid name,
For centuries of power and fame.
Success has marked, in every clime,
The reign of tyranny and crime.
Even in the Church, success could rise
From superstition, fraud, and lies ;
And still, through Satan's arts, are found
Three-fourths of men on heathen ground !

Thus, as all thoughtful minds may see,
Success affords no valid plea
To prove the moral wrong or right
Of actions in the Saviour's sight ;

Though human judgment, drawn aside
By interest, vanity, or pride,
Adopts it for a common test,
And thinks the prosperous are the blest.

How different is the sacred rule
Taught in our great Redeemer's school!
"Blessed are those that mourn," He said;
"For they to comfort shall be led."
"Blessed the poor: to them is given
The bright inheritance of heaven."
"Blessed are ye when men revile,
And make your property their spoil,
And of your name speak evil still,
And persecute you at their will.
My glory you shall also share,
If for My sake the yoke you bear;
Your weary soul shall find true rest,
And peace and joy shall fill your breast."

These principles with force apply
To that dark sin which meets the eye,
When Satan lured the worldly heart
Of Rome's proud Bishops to depart
From the pure Government defined
By the inspired Apostles' mind.

Peerless in power, in wealth, and fame,
The world's great mistress Rome became.
And hence her Bishops thought they saw
A just excuse to change the law

Laid down so clearly by the word
Of Christ, the Church's heavenly Lord,
When the Apostles, to His grief,
Contended who should be the chief.
For He rebuked their carnal pride,
And all superior rank denied.
No one amongst them should pretend
His power o'er others to extend.
Christ was their Master, and would grant
His Spirit to supply their want ;
While they, all equal in degree,
Content as brethren still should be.

In just pursuance of this plan,
We see the Apostles, man by man,
Led by the Holy Spirit's mind,
By no supremacy confined,
No Master but the Lord confessed, —
No Pope elected by the rest, —
Though some, of course, more forward stand
Amongst the Heaven-directed band ;
And Peter, James, and John and Paul,
Seemed the most active of them all.

So when the Apostles passed away,
And Bishops exercised their sway,
Their rank and power were still the same.
Though some in influence and fame
Excelled the others, none were found
To claim, of right, a higher ground,
Till several centuries had fled,
And Rome's ambition raised its head !

A story was got up with care,
That the Apostle Peter there
Had held for years the Bishop's seat, —
That Christ resolved, with favor meet,
On him, as on a rock, to build
The Church. That this might be fulfilled,
The promise of the Lord was given,
That he should hold the keys of heaven;
While all the high supremacy
Bestowed by this divine decree,
To his successors should descend,
Forever, till the world should end!

The tale was framed with subtle art,
Though plainly false in every part;
For Irenæus — witness true —
A Bishop and a martyr too —
States that St. Peter and St. Paul
To faithful Linus gave the call,
That by their act he should become
First Bishop of imperial Rome.
The famed Eusebius, known to be
The father of Church history,
Repeats the statement, word for word,
And gives it his entire accord.

These early writers are the best,
On whom our confidence can rest.
No counter evidence appears
Until the lapse of many years,
When papal Rome's increasing sway
Made interest drive the truth away.

The other portions of the tale,
When fairly viewed, are seen to fail.
The Rock on which the Church must stand
Is Christ, not Peter. The whole band
Of ancient fathers prove this sense :
The other is without defence.
The meaning of the title given
To Peter by the Lord of heaven
Marked him as a *foundation-stone* :
The Rock belongs to Christ alone.
But Peter was the first to claim
The faith which owned the Saviour's name, —
"Son of the living God!" That word,
Taught by the Spirit of the Lord,
Gained him the promise first, that he
The bearer of "the keys" should be,
Opening the kingdom to a host
On the great day of Pentecost.

'Tis true, that, to the Jewish race,
St. Peter held a leader's place.
The Twelve Apostles, whom our Lord
First summoned by His gracious word,
To the Twelve Tribes of Israel bore
A special reference. And before
The wondering world, when Christ shall come
To usher in the day of doom,
We have His royal pledge, that they
Twelve thrones of judgment shall display,
And those Twelve Tribes of Israel bring
To worship their Almighty King.

But the thirteenth Apostle, Paul,
Received a new and special call, —
To teach the Gentiles. O'er the ground
In which his marvellous work was found,
Rome held her high imperial sway ;
And there, we know, he bent his way
By the express command of Heaven,
On many marked occasions given.
A whole Epistle he addressed
To Rome, before his presence blest
Their longing eyes, and two full years
His energetic toil appears,
Residing in his hired abode.
Thus far the Scriptures guide our road,
Clearly establishing the claim
Of Paul, not Peter, to the name
Of Rome's Apostle. This to show,
No evidence can farther go.

That good St. Peter may have paid
A friendly visit there, and staid
For weeks together, may be true.
In that vast city, not a few
Of Jews were living who would hear
His preaching with attentive ear ;
While toward St. Paul a bitter hate
Had planned full oft a deadly fate
In old Judæa. Those who came
From thence to Rome would spread the same,
And thus he might desire to make
St. Peter welcome for their sake.

But this could never change the line
Of duty, fixed by voice divine ;
And hence the point should settled be
By the plain fact of Christ's decree.
His word to Peter gave the place
Of leadership to Israel's race.
His word to Paul assigned the round
Of service upon heathen ground.
His word directed him to come
And make his last abode in Rome ;
The sole Apostle who could prove
A special mission from above,
To give that pagan city light,
And plant the Gospel in their sight.

But though the tale could thus be shown
From pride and falsehood to have grown,
It gained adherence day by day,
And in the end achieved the sway
Of papal power throughout the West,
By force of law imperial pressed.
Yet still by many 'twas denied ;
The East was never satisfied ;
The prize was won at fearful cost, —
The union of the Church was lost !

The seat of empire long had changed,
By novel policy arranged :
Constantinople held the throne,
And reigned in pomp as Rome had done.

Her Bishop deemed his See should bear
Of dignity an equal share ;
The conflict of ambition rose,
The friends of yore were turned to foes,
And when eight centuries had passed,
The threatened crisis came at last.
The Church of Christ was rent in twain,
And never moved as One again.

This mournful schism may all be traced
To lust of power. The pontiff, placed
In that great diocese, whose fame
Through Europe held the highest claim,
Should all his influence have given
To guard the Government of heaven
In the safe track at first designed
By the inspired Apostles' mind.
But, by the art of Satan led,
He sought to be the Church's head, —
The earthly viceroy of the Lord,
To rule the nations by his word,
And make all other Bishops still
Dependent on his sovereign will,
Instead of leaving the control
To the fair judgment of the whole.

This revolution plainly changed
The form of polity, arranged
For Christ's own kingdom, on a ground
Falsely pretended to be found.

In Scripture and historic facts ;
While it ran counter to the acts
Of the Apostles, and the word
Through them dictated by the Lord ;
As likewise to the constant phrase
Of councils, fathers, men whose praise
By all the faithful was confessed
Pre-eminent above the rest.

Yet we may well believe the Pope
Was largely influenced by the hope
That in due time the Church would be
A gainer by his tyranny.
'Twas clear that heretics their head
Had raised, and numerous errors led
The minds of men astray. The hand
Of power seemed wanting to withstand
This danger. Liberty had grown
Licentious, and if let alone,
Through imbecility or fear,
The faith itself might disappear !
And hence true policy required
The changes which his will desired.
He only sought supreme to be
For sake of Christian unity ;
And by this argument 'twas plain,
His glory was the Church's gain !

Doubtless we may conceive that here
The Roman Bishop was sincere.
Himself deceived by Satan's art,
He acted his despotic part

With good intentions on the whole,
Believing that his strong control
Would prove a safeguard to defend
The Saviour's kingdom to the end!
Ambition thus, as oft before,
The garment of religion wore;
And while he ruled with tyrant rod,
He did it in the name of God!

The claim unjust, — the means untrue, —
No good but evil could ensue.
The plan was built upon deceit,
And thousands still the fraud repeat.
Yet while it has successful been,
'Tis none the less the work of sin.
Its triumph could not change its aim:
Its character is still the same.
But 'twas predicted that the sway
Of papal power should have its day,
Though doomed to be to ruin hurled
When Christ shall come to judge the world.

CANTO VI.

THE prophet Daniel plainly had foretold
The rise of popery and its final fall;
St. John its future history unrolled;
And 'twas predicted clearly by St. Paul.

For nine long centuries it held the rod
In Europe over every subject throne;
The Pope dispensed at will the curse of God,
And claimed the world's dominion for his own.

False documents were forged his power to aid,
The powers of earth fell prostrate at his feet,
At his dictation war and peace were made,
And kings bowed down his majesty to greet.

For if the greatest monarch should bring down
The pontiff's malediction, at his word
The sovereign forfeited his royal crown,
And only by submission was restored.

The Pope, at will, could every bond unloose
Of old allegiance by the subjects due:
The power of God, committed to his use,
Made treason lawful, and rebellion true.

In early times no Bishops were ordained,
Unless elected freely by the voice
Of priests and people, who of right retained,
Throughout the Christian world, the power of
choice.

But this the Pope abolished. He alone
Appointed Bishops by his sole decree;
Bound by no human judgment save his own,
The Church's autocrat resolved to be.

He drew vast revenues from every land
 To pay his soldiers and support his sway ;
 And gathered treasures in his grasping hand,
 Which oft were squandered recklessly away.

A temporal sovereign with a region fair,
 Which ought its ruler's wants to have supplied,
 The wealth of Europe he contrived to share,
 And spent it all on policy and pride.

Rome was his capital. No Court could vie
 With his in luxury and splendid show ;
 Religious forms in plenty charmed the eye,
 But few its moral influence seemed to know.

Licentiousness, corruption, lawless lust,
 The love of pleasure, and the greed of gold,
 Filled every station with the same distrust,
 And all were ready to be bought and sold.

Appeals to Rome from every quarter came ;
 Each nation was compelled her rule to own :
 But bribes were given and taken without shame,
 And pure, impartial justice was unknown.

'Twixt man and man, the law small power pos-
 sessed
 To guard the rights of property or life ;
 And hence each fancied injury was redressed
 By poisoned food, or the assassin's knife.

Against the Pope the Cardinals conspired
Full oft, in hopes a better sway to wield;
And then another pontiff was required,
And Pope 'gainst Pope in warfare took the field.

And once three Popes in conflict were arrayed,
While Europe stood astounded at the sight;
Each cursed the others, and with art essayed
To prove that he alone was in the right.

Sick of the shameful contest, at the last
A Council met by which their claims were tried;
And there a just and fair decree was passed,
Which set the rival pontiffs all aside.

Another was elected who had vowed
To cleanse the papal court from every stain.
Full time for reformation was allowed,
But all the Council's caution proved in vain!

The old abuses were continued still;
And though the rival Popes appeared no more,
Yet many a pontiff, poisoned through ill will,
Expired as other tyrants died before.

Through growing Superstition's dark control,
The host of monks and nuns enlarged their sway,
Till, as the price of masses for the soul,
The half of England's soil was given away.

The priests watched o'er the rich man's dying
 bed,
 And warned him of the purgatorial fire ;
 That, when his spirit from the flesh had fled,
 His gold their venal service might require.

The sacramental types, by which our Lord
 Had signified His Body and His Blood,
 Were now held forth as fit to be adored,
 When priestly power had made the wonder good.

The name of Transubstantiation, given
 To this new doctrine, never had been known
 Till the ninth century, when the Church was
 driven,
 By Satan's skill, a spurious faith to own.

For-then 'twas held, that, by the priestly act
 Of Consecration, both the bread and wine
 Passed quite away, and were replaced in fact
 By Christ's own Person, human and divine !

— And hence grew up the custom, new and strange,
 To take the Sacramental Cup away
 From all the laity, — an awful change,
 Which led the Church in Europe far astray.

Thus half the Sacrament was gone, — a loss
 To be endured, for fear it should be found
 That the dear Blood, once shed upon the cross,
 By some mischance had fallen upon the ground !

Here was a double error, first to make
The Sacrament a God to be adored,
And under a false reverence to take
The cup away, against the Saviour's word.

For "Drink ye all of this" was His command,
Distinct and clear. And so 'twas understood:
Throughout the Church, to every layman's hand
Was given the symbol of His sacred Blood.

Eight hundred years had run their varied range,
In the true order of the Gospel feast,
When Superstition dared to make the change,
Which sunk the people while it raised the priest.

Since now the grand prerogative was given
Which on the priest conferred such high control,
His power alone bestowed the Lord of heaven,
In form a wafer! on each faithful soul!

Alas! it was a triumph for the art
Of Satan, when the Church was so misled
From Scripture and the fathers to depart,
And do dishonor to her glorious Head!

They called it miracle! a poor pretence,
Which showed how low the reasoning power can
fall;
For miracles appealed to human sense,
While this was flatly hostile to it all.

The sight, the touch, the smell, the taste agreed,
To prove the presence of the bread and wine;
But Satan conquered, and the Church decreed
To take his falsehood for a truth divine.

The next invention started by his skill
Was named *INDULGENCE*. 'Twas a novel plan,
By which the Pope could exercise his will,
In pardoning sin before its guilt began.

This monstrous notion its appearance made,
When papal power had well attained its height,
To help the soldiers, in the first Crusade,
Against the Saracens with zeal to fight.

'Twas argued that the warrior on the field
Might die without the pardon of the priest;
And thus his soul would be compelled to yield
All hope from future woe to be released.

Hence it seemed right a warrant to afford
From him, the Pope who held the keys of heaven,
That the poor soldier, by his sovereign word,
Might find, beforehand, all his sins forgiven.

The doctrine with much favor was received;
It suited well the spirit of the time;
And hence, with few exceptions, 'twas believed,
And gave a new immunity to crime.

For though, before, 'twas easy to obtain
A priestly absolution, strong and sure,
'Twas safer still the Pope's own writ to gain,
As this for all the future would endure.

At first intended for the soldiers' use,
The principle was soon much farther spread ;
And it was thought much profit to produce,
Not only for the living, but the dead.

But these Indulgences were always sold ;
If given away, they had no strength at all :
The papal system had an eye to gold ;
With that, no danger could its power befall !

As time flowed on, the great Crusades were found
Of little force against Mohammed's sway ;
The kingdom formed on Saracenic ground
Was weak, and vanished in few years away.

And thus the Pope, with martial ardor fired,
A new Crusade to organize began
Against the heretics, who had conspired
The growing flames of discontent to fan.

A Council was convened, in numbers vast,
By the decree of Innocent the Third ;
And here the most oppressive laws were passed,
In which, apparently, the whole concurred.

'Twas made a duty, once in every year,
That every soul should to his priest confess :
And if omission could be made appear,
No Sacrament his dying hour should bless.

Nor should his lifeless corpse be kindly laid
In consecrated ground, or honored be
With funeral rites by common custom paid,
But buried with a marked indignity.

The same confession always must precede
The Eucharist; and in that solemn act
The party must be made to take good heed,
And tell of heretics in word or fact.

The parish-officers were all required
To hunt for heretics with zealous care,
And every lord and baron was desired
His full proportion of the search to bear.

And when those heretics were fairly known,
By judgment of the Bishop they must be
Deprived of all the property they own,
Confined or banished by his strict decree.

But if these several parties should neglect
This duty 'gainst the heretics to do,
They must for their just punishment expect
Imprisonment and confiscation too.

Such, in the main, were the provisions passed
By this great Council; and full soon the flame
Of cruel persecution, long to last,
Arose to brand the papal Church with shame.

In time, the Pope produced a ready rush
Of zealous warriors by his potent word;
And then the grand Crusade was formed to
crush
The hated heretics with fire and sword.

The Albigenses were a powerful band,
In doctrine dangerous, and morals low:
So say the papal annalists, whose hand
Recorded all the little that we know.

But the Waldenses, high in word and act,
Professed a faith acknowledged to be pure;
Their only crime consisting in the fact,
That they could not the papal power endure.

Against the foul corruptions of the age, —
The Pope, the superstition, and the strife, —
They deemed it was their duty to engage
By Scriptural reproof and holy life.

The Pope, as all their zealous preachers held,
Was the great Antichrist so long foretold:
His fabled right to govern they repelled,
And clung to the Apostles' rule of old.

Most hostile to the pontiff's lordly sway
 Were such sincere reformers. Hence arose
 The bands of the Crusade in fierce array
 Against those heretics, — the Church's foes!

Not foes, but friends, to what the Church had
 been,
 Not foes, but friends, to what the Church should
 be,
 They loved the Church as she at first was seen
 In the pure ages of antiquity.

But Satan triumphed in his cruel art;
 For God designed that men should fully know
 The spirit which would rule the human heart
 By blood and slaughter, misery and woe!

Yes, Satan triumphed! For some centuries more,
 Under the yoke of Rome's imperious will,
 The poor Waldenses their afflictions bore,
 Tortured, oppressed, exiled, but faithful still.

The bold Crusaders had no war to wage,
 For small was the resistance to their course;
 But zeal for popery fired their pious rage,
 And lust and pillage went in league with force.

Against a heretic they held it clear
 That every passion might its power display:
 The deepest, darkest sin inspired no fear;
 The pope's Indulgence cleansed it all away!

And still the pontiff's power advanced its claims,
That none against its rule should dare rebel :
They burned the hated heretics with flames,
While priestly lips consigned their souls to hell !

But what was heresy ? St. Paul had told
Titus, the Bishop, how to use the rod :
All heretics, if obstinate and bold,
Must be rejected from the Church of God.

The rule of faith and practice was contained,
Through inspiration, in the Written Word ;
By that alone was heresy restrained,
For Scripture taught the doctrine of the Lord.

To that no man's authority could add,
From that no human power could take away ;
Yet we have seen a record, dark and sad,
Of wanton change which led the Church astray, —

New dogmas for the faithful to believe,
New customs for the faithful to pursue,
New pardoning power the faithful to deceive,
New government, despotic and untrue !

Amongst these novelties, of course, we find
New rules for heresy ; for now the law
Required submission to the papal mind,
And popes had learned the sword of blood to
draw.

Mark well the difference. Once the certain test
Of faith was in the Written Word alone;
But now the voice of Rome the world addressed,
And bade them bow before the papal throne.

The pain St. Paul for heresy decreed
Was excommunication, nothing more;
But now the wretch must be condemned to bleed,
Be burned to death, or torn with torture sore,

His goods all confiscate, his household wrecked,
His children robbed; and yet his only sin
Might be the frauds of popery to reject,
And take the Bible way the prize to win!

CANTO VII.

THE papal power in every land
Retained the priests in strict command,
But would not suffer them to be
Subjected to the law's decree.
Before the Courts the Laity must come,
While priests could only be condemned at Rome.

And, further to display the rate
At which the Church controlled the State,
Her consecrated houses spread
A shield to guard each felon's head;
Within their walls if he could only stand,
He might defy the justice of the land.

For forty days he could remain,
The chances of escape to gain ;
And then, if he confessed his crime,
He might in exile spend his time :
And thus this "right of Sanctuary" gave,
In spite of law, the power his life to save.

This looked like mercy ; but the course
Was found to have a baneful force,
To breed connivance and complaint,
When justice suffered such restraint.
It was a claim no kingdom should endure ;
For law alone makes social safety sure.

The Pope to heretics could show
No mercy, as the world might know.
Why should he, then, avert the fate
Of those who sinned against the State ?
'Twas but a demonstration of the theme,
That papal power in all things was supreme !

But worse abuses still remain,
Those papal centuries to stain ;
For Superstition's active crew
Brought modes of trial, strange and new,
To break the rules by sense and reason given,
And take instead an impious call on heaven !

Trials by ordeal began.
To end disputes they doomed the man
To plunge his arm in melted lead,
On ploughshares made red-hot to tread,

Or in the wage of battle fierce to fight,
Deeming the victor must be in the right!

When charged with witchcraft, he was cast
In water, while they bandaged fast
His thumbs together, thus to note
If the poor wretch would sink or float;
For so they fancied the result would show
Whether he used Satanic power or no!

Suppose he floated, then 'twas plain,
That Satan must his slave sustain;
Suppose he sank, 'twas just as clear
That he should innocent appear;
But then the sapient judges sometimes found
That the acquitted party might be drowned!

In forms like these the priests took part,
Prepared the scene with solemn art,
And prayed aloud, with seeming zeal,
That God's decree might justice deal:
As if a miracle must still be wrought,
When law and reason both were set at nought!

But these were times of ignorance.
Among the masses, no advance
In education had been made
Beyond the wants of war and trade.
The learned clergy might sometimes be seen;
Yet they were only few, and far between!

Through those dark ages, even the race
Of nobles thought it no disgrace
That they could neither read nor write.
If the accomplished, gallant knight
Could shine in courts and armies, he was blest:
To priests and monks he yielded all the rest!

The clergy took no pains or care
To banish ignorance. Their share
Of learning was not large nor deep,
But it enabled them to keep
The government o'er knights and nobles too:
Knowledge is power, and that they found was
true.

They loved the ignorant to rule.
Why should the laymen go to school
Merely to cultivate the mind?
'Twere best to have their thoughts confined
To their appropriate walk in life, and still
Be wisely guided by the priestly will.

The slaves and serfs were born to toil,
The husbandmen should till the soil,
The low mechanics plied their trade,
The merchants were for commerce made,
The knights and nobles lived for honor's call;
But pontiff, Bishops, priests, should rule them all.

The kings by Cardinals were led,
Who stood as statesmen at the head;

The Courts of equity were ruled
By Cardinals profoundly schooled ;
While the inferior clergy, rightly drilled,
The Courts of law, without discredit, filled.

The Parliaments were governed still
By Bishops, who, with tact and skill,
Controlled the laity, and used
An influence full oft abused,
Through management adroitly understood,
To pass foul laws of bigotry and blood.

And all the men of rank and wealth
Had chaplains for their spirits' health,
Who read and wrote, as need required,
Whate'er their patrons' will desired ;
The master to the writing set his seal,
And thus he managed with the world to deal.

Yet schools there were of splendid fame,
Where students flocked of every name, —
Great Universities, designed
To strengthen and enlarge the mind :
But all were under clerical control ;
The Church, and not the State, arranged the
whole.

And hence, for centuries, so few
Appear as authors to pursue
The track of learning, save the class
Who stood distinguished in the mass
Of priests and friars. But the time drew near
When this monopoly should disappear.

The fourteenth century beheld
A work of influence which impelled
The coming crisis. Then arose
A warning on the Church's woes,
From bold John Wickliff, in the earnest hope
Of rousing England's zeal against the Pope.

The Bible he translated well,
That so the Word of God might tell
Its saving truth to every mind
Which stood to piety inclined.
The priests and Bishops were of course enraged,
And soon to crush him all their power engaged.

But the Almighty raised a friend
His life and safety to defend.
The Pontiff cited him to Rome,
Where he could not be forced to come ;
And though his persecutors did not cease,
He held his ground, and died at last in peace.

The priests his followers accused
Of heresy, and so abused
Their powerful influence as to take
The good Lord Cobham to the stake.
Such death the noble martyr deemed a gain ;
Nor was the worthy sacrifice in vain !

The work of Wickliff travelled far,
And in Bohemia raised the war
Of truth 'gainst popish error. There
Huss the reformer took his share

Of risk and danger in the sacred strife,
And in the service yielded up his life.

A Council of the Pope had met
In Constance, partly called to set
Its seal to falsehood, known to fame
By Transubstantiation's name;
And there brave Huss was summoned to attend,
Before them all his doctrine to defend.

The Emperor Sigismund had signed
A writ in language well defined,
His personal safety to insure,
That he might come and go secure;
And trusting to the high imperial word,
He took his stand, — a champion of the Lord!

But 'twas in vain! Their fixed decree
Pronounced his doctrine heresy.
The emperor broke his plighted faith,
And basely gave him up to death:
He walked the path the holy martyrs trod,
And gladly perished for the truth of God!

Jerome of Prague, an honored name,
A papal victim next became.
A long religious war ensued;
The Hussites wept with tears of blood!
The sacramental cup was all their gain;
As for the rest, the struggle proved in vain!

But now the Eastern empire's power
Had reached at last its fated hour:
Constantinople fell! The work
Had been accomplished by the Turk.
The Church of Greece bowed down in shame
and loss;
Mohammed's Crescent triumphed o'er the Cross!

The Greeks had long declining been,
Effeminate and sunk in sin:
Religion's forms remained alone;
Its ancient zeal and strength had flown:
But they were well refined by learning's sway,
And classic lore had suffered no decay.

Their country conquered by the hand
Which held the cruel Turkish brand,
They scattered over Europe, there
To find some refuge from despair;
And in due time they raised an ardent flame
For Grecian learning wheresoe'er they came.

But their success was largely due
To the invention, grand and new,
Of printing, which so well supplied
The means of knowledge far and wide:
The Providence of God through these unfurled
The flag of Reformation to the world!

Yet first came forth an awful sight,
When kingly force and papal might

Concurred, from policy alone,
To raise the Inquisition's throne,
And punish heretics of various names
By racking torments and consuming flames.

Seized by this dark tribunal's power,
In secret at the midnight hour,
The hapless victim, borne away
To dungeons from the light of day,
Was driven, by torture's diabolic art,
To act his own accuser's dreadful part.

No friend allowed to see his face,
In gloomy cell he found his place,
So deep, that groans and shriekings there
Could never reach the upper air ;
And there they racked his frame from time to
time,
To force confession of a nameless crime.

'Twas heresy to breathe a word
Against the Pope, the Sovereign Lord ;
Or question if the Virgin heard
The countless prayers for aid preferred ;
Or doubt if priests by consecration could
Transform the Bread and Wine to Flesh and
Blood.

And so of all the dogmas taught, —
If even in his secret thought
The wretched man had dared to stray
From papal Rome's unerring way,

He must recant, or else by sentence dire
He paid the penalty of death by fire!

But this was nothing new for Rome.
The Inquisition had become
A settled principle of right,
Since that great Council saw the light
Which Innocent the Third had held before, —
Notorious for two hundred years and more.

Yet, though the Church so long had been
Accustomed to the dreadful scene
Of slaughter, dealt by sword and flame,
Most foully, in the Saviour's name,
This far exceeded all the world had known,
And stood in bloody cruelty alone.

For Ferdinand, that crafty king,
Resolved his proud grandees to bring
In due subjection to his sway,
While confiscation swept away
Their wealth into his coffers. So he planned
This pious scheme to subjugate the land.

There was no Court whose power they feared,
No royal sceptre much revered;
The Pope alone held high control,
For he was Sovereign o'er the soul;
And hence the Church's curb might be applied
When all restraint besides would be denied.

A Court raised up to guard the faith,
Whose judgment would be sealed by death
And confiscation; on whose course
All must rely without resource;
Whose judges chosen by the king should be,
But still commissioned by the Pope's decree;

A Court with ample power to make
Its rules of trial, and to take
All its proceedings from the eye
Of public gaze and scrutiny,
While veneration for the Church should cast
A safeguard round each sentence which it
passed;—

Such a tribunal, with due care
Conducted, might be made to bear
A new but most effective part
In aid of kingly power and art.
And Ferdinand had well surveyed his ground.
And took his course with subtlety profound.

The first great feature of the plan
Was secrecy. The hapless man
Who was imprisoned never knew
The foe with whom he had to do:
The name of his accuser was concealed,
And by no management could be revealed.

The next great rule was to compel
The party of himself to tell
Whate'er his judges chose to ask,
By means of torture. 'Twas a task

Performed in deep and subterraneous room,
And language fails to paint the victim's doom.

Few men such treatment could withstand.
The judges were a heartless band,
Resolved no agony to spare
Which human strength and life could bear,
Until at length the torturing rack had wrung
Such words as suited from the prisoner's tongue.

The pope at first refused to aid
The plan which Ferdinand had laid ;
But policy prevailed in time,
And Rome approved the course of crime
Through which this hateful Court, for centuries,
stood
Pre-eminent in cruelty and blood.

But here the priests of Rome pretend
The whole proceeding to defend.
The Inquisition, as they say,
Took no man's life or goods away :
Their office was his heresy to try ;
Nor did their hand his punishment apply.

The Church her ancient rule preserved,
And from her maxim never swerved :
From war and blood abstaining still,
She shows the culprit her good will ;
And when her judges yield him to the State,
They ask that mercy may avert his fate.

The Inquisition did no more
Than had been always done before.
When they had closed their task, they saw
The man delivered to the law
With kindly wishes. 'Twas not their desire
That the poor wretch should perish in the fire!

But this excuse, though true in form,
Is false in substance. As the storm
Produces shipwreck, though the wave,
And not the wind, prepares the grave,
Even so the priests had made each nation frame
The laws which doomed the heretic to flame.

The Lateran Council had laid down
The rule which governed every throne;
The Church established in each land
Bore everywhere the highest hand;
And hence the death to heretics assigned
Was but the transcript of the Church's mind.

And therefore, when the culprit passed
The Inquisition's gates at last,
To be conducted to the stake,
With mercy for the Saviour's sake,
It was a shameless mockery, which well
Might move the laughter of the prince of hell.

Mercy! the Inquisition's prayer!
Who ever thought of mercy there?
Mercy! in dark and lonely cell,
With pain and agony to dwell!

Mercy! from those whose tortures caused more
woe
Than martyrs at the stake could ever know!

The law of Moses had decreed
The worst of criminals to bleed
By stoning, and on witness given
From two at least, in sight of heaven;
But these Inquisitorial judges trod,
Without compunction, on the law of God.

And yet, the simple to beguile,
They talked of mercy all the while;
And dared in Christ's own name to slay
Their wretched victims day by day.
Thus papal policy and kingly art
Plunged deep in misery many a tortured heart.

Three centuries passed beneath the reign
Of this demoniac Court in Spain;
Three hundred thousand victims left
The record of its power, bereft
Of land and life. The pope maintained it still,
And, when it fell, 'twas by Napoleon's will.

With reverence we may well conclude
That the Almighty deemed it good,
By this convincing proof, to show
How far the papal Church could go,
To all the precepts of the Gospels blind,
Resolved by cruelty to rule mankind!

But now a wondrous change arose
The fifteenth century to close ;
A change which opened regions new,
And led the world with joy to view
Fresh paths in which ambition's steps might tread,
And find a wreath of honor for its head.

A great discovery was at hand.
Columbus found the glorious land
Which forms our Western Continent ;
And Spain and Portugal, intent
On gold and conquest, raised their wondering
eyes,
And sent their bands to seize upon the prize.

It had the settled rule become
For ages in the Church of Rome,
That he who claimed, by Christ's decree,
The world's great Sovereign to be,
Had ample power all lands to give away,
By virtue of his universal sway.

This power the popes had oft employed.
The benefit was not enjoyed
For nothing. It was bought and sold,
Like other grants, for solid gold.
And France, as well as Portugal and Spain,
Had papal license given, in hope of gain.

The case of Ireland was the same.
Henry the Second made his claim,

And had it from the Pontiff's hand
 That England should hold full command
 O'er all the natives of that lovely isle,
 While Peter pence should be his share of spoil.

'Twas thus, with not a shade of doubt,
 America was parcelled out:
 The priests went on, inspired with hope,
 To gain new nations for the pope;
 And regions vast, by Europe's power o'ercome,
 Were made submissive to the Church of Rome.

CANTO VIII.

For many centuries, the general sense
 Of Europe was against the Court of Rome:
 War after war was waged in its defence,
 And more and more corrupt it had become.

The cry for reformation had been raised
 By many who were loyal to the faith,
 Which, as it stood, with ready zeal they praised,
 Resolved to hold its dogmas until death.

But there was a distinction, clear and strong,
 Between the pope as Bishop and as King:
 The *Sovereign* might and often did go wrong;
 To blame the *Bishop* was a different thing.

The *Church* of Rome, as they had all been
 taught,
 Was quite infallible, and could not err ;
 The *Court* of Rome was oft to ruin brought,
 And reformation was demanded there.

And hence through many years, from time to
 time,
 Councils were called to bring about the change ;
 But all in vain. Venalty and crime
 Continued still to run their usual range.

The reformation which the case required
 Was in the *Church*,— her doctrine was impure :
 The faith at first set forth, by Heaven inspired,
 She had been taught no longer to endure.

For though she still retained her ancient Creed,
 'Twas not enough the sinner to recall :
 Of all her new inventions faith had need,
 And he who would be saved must take them all.

The worship of the Virgin and the saints ;
 The idol-homage to the Bread and Wine ;
 The priestly power to pardon sin's attainments ;
 The pope's vast empire, held to be divine ;

His high prerogative to end the pain
 Of purgatory by his will's control, —
 All these the Christian must accept, or gain
 The name of heretic, and lose his soul.

But now, at length, in answer to the prayer
Of mourning thousands, the set time drew near,
A thorough Reformation to prepare,
When the pure Gospel should again appear.

The sixteenth century saw the See of Rome
By Leo filled, the Tenth who bore the name ;
And he resolved to build St. Peter's dome,
And so establish an enduring fame.

To raise the money for this gorgeous pile
He scattered all abroad, with royal hand,
Indulgences, expressed in liberal style,
Through priestly agents named for every land.

Tetzel, appointed thus his writs to sell
At Wittemberg, a great sensation made ;
And praised these grand Indulgences so well,
That it was quite a profitable trade.

"Buy them," he said, "to place your friend at
rest
From purgatorial pains their grace is given ;
For, when the money tinkles in the chest,
The happy soul released goes straight to heaven!"

But God raised up a champion full of zeal,
To check the impious boaster in his pride.
Luther came forth his strong rebuke to deal,
And Tetzel's doctrine openly denied.

A public disputation soon was held,
In which the bold reformer gained applause :
From many minds the error was dispelled,
And Luther's arguments had won the cause.

His Sovereign lord was Frederic the Wise,
Elector of old Saxony ; and he,
Beholding Luther with admiring eyes,
Resolved his friend and advocate to be.

The great Redeemer's Providence had now
Bestowed on Luther's course a high renown ;
Nor could his honest head be forced to bow
Before the wearer of the papal crown.

A monk of the Augustine order, brought
To knowledge in the ancient Fathers' school,
He saw how all the early writers taught
That faith from Scripture took its only rule.

Step after step he felt his cautious way
Through all the sad corruptions of the past,
Until the papal, anti-Christian sway
Was understood, and all exposed at last.

He preached and wrote with energy and force :
All Germany resounded with his fame,
And took, with France and Switzerland, the
course
Of reformation in the Saviour's name.

Melanethon, Calvin, and Zuinglius bore
In the great movement a distinguished part,
As leaders of renown ; but thousands more
Aided the noble work with all their heart.

The emperor, Charles the Fifth, at first appeared
Inclined to place himself on neutral ground ;
But papal influence soon interfered,
And to the side of Rome his efforts bound.

A civil war ensued, which lasted long :
The truth had many evils to endure ;
But still its friends in faith and hope were strong,
And in the end their rights were made secure.

The work in England had a later date :
Henry the Eighth, when Luther's course was
known,
Condemned his doctrines with polemic hate,
And wrote a book his errors to disown.

The famous Cardinal Wolsey held the post
Of his prime minister, and led the king
In proud magnificence to make his boast,
And deem economy a worthless thing.

The treasures which his father's careful hand
Had wisely hoarded, soon were made to fly ;
And Wolsey was not slow to understand
That some expedient must the want supply.

The convents and the monasteries held
 The half of England's riches at the time :
 If all the monks and nuns could be expelled,
 The Cardinal thought it would not be a crime.

For they had long become an odious race
 To king and nobles, in seclusion bred :
 They scorned the courtiers in their pride of place,
 And only owned the pope to be their head.

The monarch's scruples soon were overcome
 By Wolsey's arguments; the pope was gained
 Through his unbounded influence at Rome,
 And thus his subtle plan was well sustained.

It was a fatal blow to papal power
 That all monastic wealth was swept away,
 And aided largely to bring on the hour
 When reformation should its light display.

But yet the mode in which the work was done
 Seemed fair enough. No sentence was pro-
 claimed
 Until commissioned agents first had gone,
 And, on inspection, the delinquents named.

A vast amount of crime was thus laid bare :
 Lust, lying, fraud, tyrannical control,
 And other sins which justice could not spare,
 With few exceptions, rested on the whole.

The plain alternative was now supplied
In a distinct and practicable shape, —
Their charters to surrender, or be tried,
With slender expectation of escape.

Of course they chose, however undesired,
Surrender, on such terms as they could gain.
Wolsey from Rome itself his powers acquired,
And contest with such odds would be in vain.

The subtle Cardinal with success arranged
The working force of his financial plan :
Monastic wealth its owners quickly changed,
And monkish credit soon to ruin ran.

But far more serious was the next attack
Which Rome was forced to suffer from the king.
'Twas this that opened wide the sacred track
For all the blessings which reform could bring.

The queen, to whom his wedded faith was due,
Was Catharine, daughter of the royal pair
Named Ferdinand and Isabella. Few
Could boast a lineage nobler or more fair.

But she had been his brother Arthur's wife ;
And, though her husband died, the law's decree
Forbade the holy bond of wedded life
'Twixt her and Henry solemnized to be.

Of course this obstacle they all foresaw ;
But then the pope possessed a full control
In matters which concerned the Canon law,
By dispensation to relieve the soul.

This being done, they married. Twenty years
They lived together. Then the monarch's mind
Became distracted by new doubts and fears,
For which his counsellors no cure could find.

It was a settled doctrine at that day
That by the words of Scripture 'twas a sin
To wed a brother's widow. Who could say
That he was truly married to his queen ?

The papal dispensation might be good
In cases which the Canon laws define ;
But by the Church 'twas never understood
That popes could set aside the law divine.

These doubts and scruples gave the king no rest :
Divorce appeared to be the only cure.
With gifts and prayers the pontiff was addressed,
Till royal patience could no more endure.

The pope was well inclined to please the king ;
But Catharine was the emperor's aunt, and he
Could never be induced his mind to bring
In base approval of the wished decree.

For Henry's project 'twas an evil hour.
The pope could not afford a foe to make
Of one so great as Charles in wealth and power,
And so he temporized for prudence' sake.

The king at last, by Cranmer's counsel moved,
Resolved the case before the schools to lay,
That thus the theologians most approved
Their judgment on its merits might display.

Forthwith his agents were dispersed abroad ;
And by the general voice his views were seen
To be in concord with the Word of God,
Which quite condemned his marriage with the
 queen.

Cranmer meanwhile had been Archbishop made ;
The pontiff's power o'er England's Church was
 gone ;
The act of Parliament his claims gainsaid,
And all his fancied rights were overthrown.

The Bishops, lords, and commons had espoused
The monarch's wishes with united voice ;
The spirit of reform was fully roused,
And all the advocates of truth rejoiced.

But no advance was made in Henry's reign
The Church's ancient doctrine to restore :
'Twas his her independence to regain ;
Beyond that object he would do no more.

Archbishop Cranmer granted his divorce,
Though Catharine the authority denied:
Wife after wife he married, but his course
Was dark with gloom and sorrow till he died.

His son was the Sixth Edward, raised on high
While still a child; yet he, by grace divine,
Was taught the truths of Scripture to apply,
And piety with wisdom to combine.

A youthful prodigy of fervent faith,
Derived from inspiration's pure control,
He roused the Bishops with his royal breath
To fix the doctrines which inform the soul.

Cranmer and Ridley, learned and pious men,
With Latimer and Hooper, took the lead;
Their writings and their sermons, clear and plain,
The knowledge of the truth through England
spread.

The Church's Government, as first decreed
By Apostolic wisdom, was restored;
The Liturgy, from Superstition freed,
Brought back the ancient worship of the Lord.

The Articles, in terms precise and fair,
Exposed the fearful errors of the past;
The Bible was translated with due care,
And so the Church stood well reformed at last.

The saint-like youth who occupied the throne
Thus filled his bright and Heaven-directed reign ;
But yet the victory was not wholly won,
For Rome fought hard her influence to sustain.

Eight years had passed in labors of reform,
When Edward died, and Mary took his seat.
Then rose the muttering of the coming storm,
Designed the noble movement to defeat.

Queen Catharine's daughter, she was fully bent
That reformation should be preached no more ;
Resolved her royal power should all be spent
The pope's old yoke in England to restore.

Philip of Spain her husband had become, —
The emperor's son, bred to despotic rule,
Devoted to the faith of papal Rome,
And to the bloody Inquisition's school.

The Parliament, brought over by the arts
Which royal powers so easily supply,
Confessed their sin, and, with submissive hearts,
Craved pardon from the pontiff's clemency.

Of course this prayer was granted by the pope :
England was reconciled ! and then 'twas found
That many, who professed a better hope
In Edward's time, were prompt to change their
ground.

The larger portion of the Bishops turned
Back to their idols with officious zeal;
And papal vengeance 'gainst reformers burned,
Which every faithful soul was doomed to feel.

But yet a goodly number, who, in dread
Of persecution's rage, forsook the land,
To Germany and Switzerland had fled,
And met warm welcome at their brethren's hand.

The noble leaders who refused to leave
The post of danger in the fearful strife,
Stood strong in faith, expecting to receive
The crown of glory in the loss of life.

Hooper, a Bishop, zealous for the right,
Was called to perish in the awful flame;
Ridley and Latimer, through heavenly might,
With words of triumph won the martyr's name.

And Cranmer, though bowed down with age and
grief,
And for a season seemingly o'ercome,
With ardent zeal proclaimed his firm belief,
And passed through fire to his celestial home.

Two hundred forty on the list appear,
As victims burned alive in Mary's reign, —
A host of martyrs, spite of pain and fear;
Nor was the glorious sacrifice in vain.

The nation grew disgusted at the scene :
The system of the pope was understood ;
"The man of sin " they thought he might have
 been,
Since all could see he was a man of blood !

The martyrs at the first laid down their life
To plant the Church, the kingdom of the Lord ;
And martyrs now were needed in the strife
Through which her ancient truth must be re-
 stored.

And thus the Providence of God was plain.
Four years of popish Mary's cruel rule
Convinced the English, honest and humane,
That Rome had ceased to be the Christian's
 school.

Compassion, sympathy, and justice moved
Their hearts against her dark and savage sway ;
And, taught by suffering, multitudes approved
The martyr's teaching of the better way.

For though the populace had given the name
Of "Bloody Mary " to the hapless queen,
'Twas known that she was not so much to blame
As those who made a merit of the sin.

The pope, the Bishops, and the priests, combined,
Displayed their usual policy and skill ;
The queen was wholly governed by their mind, —
The ready tool of their despotic will.

But, by the merciful decree of Heaven,
 Four years brought death to close that cruel
 reign.

The needed lesson had been fully given,
 And true Religion raised her head again!

CANTO IX.

IN fifteen hundred fifty-eight,
 It pleased the Lord to change the state
 Of England's Church; for now the land
 No longer felt the tyrant hand
 Of persecution. On the throne
 A virgin princess sat alone,—
 The famed Elizabeth, whose mind
 To reformation stood inclined;
 Although the priests indulged the hope
 To win her over to the pope.

The expectation which they held
 Was soon, however, quite dispelled.
 Among the Bishops, none were found,
 Save one, by whom she could be crowned.
 The Parliament in Mary's reign
 Her birth had branded with a stain
 By nullifying the divorce
 Of royal Catharine. This, of course,
 Deprived her mother of all claim
 As Henry's wife, except in name;

And hence the Bishops could not own
Her right to occupy the throne.

The queen had girt her seat around
With counsellors of skill profound,
Resolved that papal art no more
Should govern England as before.
And she possessed a spirit high,
Which few with safety could defy.
The danger at a glance she saw ;
But, for the time, her word was law.
And so, to curb their discontent,
The bishops to the Tower were sent,
And on the royal list set down
As traitors, plotting 'gainst the crown.

The place which Cranmer used to fill —
As Primate of all England — still
Was vacant ; and, without delay,
The Council fixed a fitting day
To set a new incumbent there, —
A man esteemed for faith and prayer,
Who held a true reformer's claim, —
And Matthew Parker was his name.
Four worthy Bishops without stain
Had gone abroad in Mary's reign ;
And these were called, with solemn state,
This learned priest to consecrate.
The new Archbishop crowned the queen
With public joy but rarely seen ;
And shouts of triumph rose to prove
Her hold upon the nation's love.

The Parliament commenced its course,
To give the whole its legal force.
With warm alacrity and zeal,
They hastened promptly to repeal
The shameful acts so lately passed,
Which at the Pontiff's feet had cast
Their noble kingdom, in the hour
When priestcraft held the sword of power.
The Lords and Commons with acclaim
Affirmed the pure and spotless fame
By which Elizabeth alone
Was proved entitled to the throne.
The Pope's usurped and bloody sway
O'er England's Church was swept away,
And all her rights were placed again
Just as they were in Edward's reign.

This work at once removed the ground
On which the papal Bishops found
A valid pretext for their act,
And yet they would not now retract.
In Henry's time, they had denied
The claims of Rome; and, when he died,
They turned reformers at the word
Of Edward, as their sovereign lord.
Next they resumed the Pontiff's yoke
In Mary's days; and thus they broke
Their faith so oft, no trust could be
Attached to their sincerity.
Regarded and esteemed by none,
They felt their influence was gone;

And, since they had no hope in store,
They thought it best to change no more.
That they were traitors now was clear,
And thus their Sees, within the year,
Were filled with honest, faithful men,
Who counted truth the highest gain.

The emperor Charles, with morbid mind,
His power to Philip had resigned;
And he, since Mary now was dead,
Proposed Elizabeth to wed,
Unwilling to release his hold
On England's power and England's gold,
And sure that his ambitious hope
Would be most grateful to the Pope,
Whose dispensation would be given
With promptness, in the name of Heaven.

Sore was the blow to Philip's pride
When his proposal was denied;
And great the Pontiff's wrath to see
That England's Church again was free.
But Rome had still adherents strong,
Of priests and lords a goodly throng,
Prepared his system to defend,
On whom he thought he might depend,
If he should exercise the rod
As vicar to the Son of God.

Ere long a hostile scheme was planned
By Rome and Philip 'gainst the land.

A second Bull was quickly seen,
To excommunicate the queen,
And free her subjects from their vow
Of due allegiance; while her brow
No longer should disgrace the crown
Which no arch-heretic might own.

The plan looked hopeful in the eyes
Of many. Vast were the supplies
Of Spanish men and money raised;
While priests and Bishops warmly praised
The emperor's purpose to reclaim
Fair England from the double shame
Of placing high, in royal state,
A woman excommunicate,
Who was, besides, by birth unclean, —
The base-born child of Henry's sin!

The great Armada of old Spain,
Provided with a gorgeous train
Of troops and implements of war,
Whose fame was sounded from afar,
Was now at last prepared to sail, —
Its master certain to prevail;
For such a navy ne'er had been
On the wide ocean's bosom seen.

And how did this alarming plan
Affect the queen? Her work began
In rousing the brave English heart
To take their favorite sovereign's part.

The Pope's bright project proved in vain ;
His Bull was treated with disdain !
The people armed on every hand
The proud invader to withstand.
The fleet was put in due array,
And scoured the channel night and day.
Not one disloyal movement rose
To give support to England's foes ;
While earnest prayer and faith sincere
O'ermastered every sense of fear,
And made each pious soul abide
In trust that God was on their side.

And so it proved. The hosts of Spain
In boastful triumph ploughed the main,
With false assurance, strong and high,
Their banners flaunting to the sky.
But, as near Albion's cliffs they drew,
Behold ! a mighty tempest blew ;
The waves, as if to fury lashed,
O'er all the hapless navy dashed ;
By lightning bolts their masts were riven ;
The thunders shook the vault of heaven ;
Clouds piled on clouds obscured the light,
And wrapped them in the gloom of night ;
The mass of waters swept each deck,
Till every ship became a wreck.
The Virgin and the saints in vain
Were all invoked with cries of pain !
Like Pharaoh's army doomed to be,
Which perished in the dark Red Sea,

Down, down they sunk! The glorious host
Were in the raging ocean lost!
No prayers nor struggles could avail,
And few escaped to tell the tale.

O what a hymn of praise arose,
When thus, against His Church's foes,
The Lord of heaven displayed His might
Before the world's astonished sight!
Praise from the voice of age and youth;
Praise for His mercy and His truth;
Praise for His judgment in the hour
When human pride proclaimed its power;
And praise for the protecting arm
Which saved His faithful flock from harm!

CANTO X.

THE Church of England now was wholly free
From papal influence; but, ere many years,
Discordant sentiments were found to be
A fruitful source of troubles and of fears.

The Reformation which had been attained
In other countries took a varied shape:
No union in their labors could be gained,
Nor did the best from error quite escape.

The Lutherans came nearest to the mark ;
The Calvinists were next in power and fame ;
While the Socinians wandered in the dark,
And lost the glory of the Saviour's name.

The Anabaptists at their outset tried
A bold career of carnal strife and death ;
But their fanatic claims were laid aside,
And then they prospered in the Baptist faith.

Of these, the followers of Calvin took
The name of Presbyterians, and professed
A correspondence with the Sacred Book,
More primitive and perfect than the rest.

Their discipline and doctrine were embraced
In Scotland by a preacher much revered ;
And to their work in England may be traced
The spirit of dissent which soon appeared.

The English Church some zealous men contained,
Whose hate of popery led them to disclaim
The only form of government sustained
By warrant of the great Apostles' name.

The Pontiff was a Bishop ; and they held
That hence no Church of Christ reformed could
be,
Till Bishops from their office were expelled,
And power was vested in the laity.

They closed their eyes to the celestial Word
Laid down in Scripture, on the honor due
To rulers in the kingdom of the Lord,
So long as they were faithful, just, and true.

And they forgot how the Apostles' mind
Was guided by the Spirit to arrange
The government of Bishops. Who shall find
A warrant which can authorize a change?

That Popes were Bishops, every man must own ;
But Rome had Bishops for six hundred years
Before the claims of popery were known,
As from the Church's history appears.

'Twas not as Bishop that the Pope could reign
O'er the whole world with absolute control,
And scatter curses linked with grief and pain,
And force submission from each Christian soul.

'Twas not as Bishop that he could precede
The kings who came his majesty to greet,
Or add new dogmas to the Church's creed,
Or bring all other Bishops to his feet.

The rightful power of Bishops is a trust,
By Holy Scripture still with care restrained,
Averse to strife, by prayer and kindness nursed,
For order and for unity ordained.

The Bishop's jurisdiction is confined
Within a moderate circle, there to see
That all the duties for the Church designed
Administered with faith and zeal may be.

He has no power the law to change or slight:
In discipline he must pursue the road
As 'tis laid down, nor can he claim the right
To lord it o'er the heritage of God.

The argument of those misguided men,
Which sought the Pope with Bishops to confound,
Was therefore an absurdity so plain,
That one more manifest can scarce be found.

But they had still another charge to make
Against the garment ordered for the priest:
A grave exception here they strove to take,
And from their bondage longed to be released.

The surplice, in the Church's service worn,
Was but a RAG OF POPEERY in their mind!
And yet in this they only showed their scorn
Towards that which God for Israel designed.

For pure white linen was the dress required
Of all the priests in Aaron's sacred line:
By Rome the preacher was in black attired;
But white was ordered by the Word divine.

Why should the minister of Christ employ
The hue which speaks of mourning and of grief?
The herald of the "tidings of great joy"
Is sent from all our woes to give relief.

The messenger of light and life and love
Should wear the garb which suits the Gospel's
aim;
And hence it was gross folly to reprove
What reason joins with Scripture to proclaim.

It was an innovation on the track
Of sacred usage, when the Pontiff's will
Conferred upon the friars, clothed in black,
A right the office of the priest to fill.

The change began long centuries before
The time of Reformation. Then arose
The angry strife, increasing more and more,
Which made the priests and monks such bitter
foes.

These preaching friars were a favored class,
By papal license everywhere allowed
To enter any Church, and after Mass
Ascend the pulpit, and address the crowd.

'Twas thus that popery introduced the mode
Of making black the preacher's proper hue.
White has the sanction of the Word of God;
Black to the Pontiff's power is wholly due.

The question, in itself, involved no breach
Of doctrine appertaining to the soul;
But it was urged by those who love to teach
How much the Church still followed Rome's con-
trol.

And sad it is to see how Christian men,
Led by false zeal, to such excesses ran,
Condemning what the Jewish laws contain,
And praising what the Pope himself began!

On such poor grounds arose a novel sect,
Under the reign of England's famous queen,
Resolved the Church's system to reject,
As still remaining popish and unclean.

These were the Puritans, who cast aside
Her government and worship in disdain;
With Korah, Dathan, and Abiram's pride,
The people's sole dominion to sustain.

The other sects, who opened up the way
Through Luther's zeal and Calvin's earnest voice,
Were organized without a Bishop's sway,
From pure necessity, and not from choice.

The Puritans took quite a different view:
Seceders without any valid plea,
They chose a novel system to pursue,
And called rebellion Christian liberty!

Luther and Calvin framed a form of prayer,
And old John Knox in Scotland did the same ;
But Puritans made each his own prepare,
As the true way to feed devotion's flame.

And this new plan became the favorite mode
With all the sects. The tyranny of Rome
Once broken, every leader chose the road
That pleased his fancy, towards his heavenly
home.

And hence arose the evils of dissent :
No union amongst Protestants was found ;
The Church of England only was intent
On holding fast the Apostolic ground.

Ere long the colonists, who crossed the sea
To plant religion on our Western soil,
Brought ministers of every class to be
Their safeguard through the work of blood and
spoil.

Virginia, named in honor of the queen,
The Nation's Church her chosen teacher made ;
While fair New England was the favored scene
In which the Puritans their power displayed.

In Maryland, Lord Baltimore had gained
For Roman Catholics a strong control ;
Yet, strange to say, 'twas he who first sustained
The law of toleration for the whole.

In Pennsylvania, the peculiar sect
Of Friends, or Quakers, took their peaceful rule :
A worthy band, if they did not reject
So much enjoined in the Apostles' school.

New York at first was settled by a force
Of Presbyterians from old Holland's shore :
But soon the English came ; and then, of course,
The Church commenced, and prospered more and
more.

As time rolled on, the rising wealth and fame
Of all the colonies drew large supplies
From foreign nations, while the crowds who
came
Surveyed the prospect with admiring eyes.

With land so cheap and plenty, taxes small ;
With industry and labor richly paid ;
With social privilege alike for all,
And every human hope in light arrayed ;

With no aristocratic class to shine
Above the rest, in rank and wealth secure ;
With no oppressive laws to draw the line
In favor of the rich against the poor :—

No wonder that advantages like these
A constant influx from old Europe won.
All sects were welcome ; all could hope to please ;
And total failure need be feared by none.

'Twas true, in Massachusetts, for a while,
The Pilgrim Fathers held a stringent reign.
Lest doctrine false the people should beguile,
They tried to keep it out by law, in vain.

The Romish priest, the Baptist, and the Friend
Were all subjected by their stern decree
To whipping, fines, and exile; and the end,
If they returned, was on the gallows-tree.

As tolerance of error was a sin,
They banished Williams, and four Quakers hung;
Deeming these hapless victims moved within
By the foul spirit from which popery sprung.

But this soon vanished. Men of different mind
Arose to wield a more indulgent sway:
The puritanic zeal ere long declined,
And liberal toleration won the day.

Meanwhile the Church, in those colonial days,
Had gained some settlement throughout the land,
Although the British powers refused to raise
A Bishop's See among the sects to stand.

But, when the storm of Revolution came,
The little strength she had was soon destroyed:
Her clergy, for the most part, could not claim
A right to be by patriot force employed.

Their prayers for King and Council to omit,
Seemed, in their mind, to be almost a crime;
And hence it was impossible to fit
Their service to the changes of the time.

The people closed the Church against the priest;
The patriot preachers had the public ear;
And England's ministers their efforts ceased,
And crossed the seas with many a bitter tear.

Sad was the hostile spirit that ensued
Against the altars of the Church arrayed:
The work of sacrilege to men seemed good,
And horses drank from Fonts for Baptism made.

But there were still a few, by wisdom led,
Among the clergy, who were on the side
Of independence; and, when others fled,
Their constant labors to the Church supplied.

Of these good men, the best distinguished name
Was that of William White. He took his stand
As Chaplain to the Congress, and his fame
Is linked with those most honored in the land.

And when their course, though destined to succeed,
Through seven long years of arduous conflict
passed,
'Twas his to hail the grand result decreed,
Which crowned the cause of Liberty at last.

Thirteen United Commonwealths appeared
Amongst the nations now to claim their state ;
But, while for this his patriot heart was cheered,
He felt most anxious for the Church's fate.

And so, with zeal and energy combined,
He called her scattered members to convene,
And led the views of their collected mind
With tact and prudent judgment rarely seen.

To organize the Church with due regard
To Apostolic rule, which was her boast,
Demanded Bishops. If from these debarred,
Her character for order would be lost.

The clergy of Connecticut began,
Electing Seabury their chief to be ;
And he — a faithful, learned, and zealous man —
In search of Consecration crossed the sea.

The English Bishops were, of course, the first
To whose kind feeling his appeal was made ;
But in the way 'twas found the law had thrust
An obstacle which could not be gainsaid.

For every Bishop consecrated there
Must swear allegiance in a subject's name ;
And Parliament, they said, must first prepare
A special Act to suit the novel claim.

This process was too doubtful and too slow
To meet the object which he sought to gain ;
And so to Scotland he resolved to go,
Where no such law the Bishops could restrain.

Those Bishops had succeeded to the band
Of the Non-jurors, by that title known,
Because they would not swear to take their stand
As subjects when King William held the throne.

A noble band! Although we deem them wrong,
On such an argument to leave their place,
Yet are they praised by every faithful tongue
For lofty principle and Christian grace.

From their successors Seabury obtained
His Consecration, and, without delay,
Returned to execute the office gained,
In the mild spirit of paternal sway.

Ere long, the British Parliament fulfilled
The plan so many anxious hearts desired :
A law was passed by which the Church could
yield
The boon that our necessities required.

Three worthy priests were chosen for the rite
Of Consecration. All were men of note :
The Pennsylvanians named their favorite White ;
And, in New York, Provoost obtained the vote.

The third was Madison, — a name revered
Amongst Virginians; and, with order due,
A Bishop's office was on each conferred,
Henceforth through life its duties to pursue.

The good Archbishop and his colleagues gave
Their kind adieus with words of love sincere;
And soon they crossed the broad Atlantic's wave
To enter on their new official sphere.

Thus from the Mother Church has ours received
The order of the Apostolic line;
No longer of its native rights bereaved,
But armed with power of government divine.

And it has prospered far beyond the hope
Of those who saw it at that early day;
Nor can we estimate its future scope,
Or count the blessings of its onward way!

And now the task proposed is done:
The promised goal is fairly won.
The Church's history, frankly traced,
Before the reader's eyes is placed
In humble verse; but, ere I end,
Some useful thoughts I would commend
To those who wish to contemplate,
With hopeful hearts, our present state.

The gracious Gospel of the Lord,
Set forth so clearly in His Word,
The blessed Bible, stands professed
Amidst division and unrest.
A hundred jarring sects and more
Have shown the folly, o'er and o'er,
Of aiming to improve the plan
Devised by Heaven for sinful man.

No peace or unity is found
In Christendom. The holy ground
Has been invaded by the art
Of Satan's power, in every part.
"Divide and conquer" still has been
His maxim. The results are seen
In all the discord, pain, and strife
Which sore annoy the Church's life;
In infidelity, whose sway
Controls the science of our day;
In reckless violence and fraud,
Regardless of the law of God;
In proud rebellion 'gainst the rule
Of discipline in home and school;
In Mammon-worship, — young and old
Devoted to the lust for gold;
In Pleasure's all-engrossing rage,
Whose charms such multitudes engage:
While Christian Sabbaths are profaned,
The Gospel's influence disdained,
And few appear its power to feel
With grateful trust or ardent zeal!

With all these evils, hour by hour
Increasing in their baneful power,
A call for Union has gone forth
From East to West, from South to North ;
Union amongst the hosts who claim
Of Protestants the boasted name ;
Union against the Church of Rome ;
Through which each sect may soon become
A portion of the mighty whole,
With firm and undivided soul,
And fervent zeal and faithful word,
To wage the warfare of the Lord ;
While yet this Union shall respect
The present state of every sect,
And leave it free to keep the way
Which led it from the truth to stray !

Strange Union, where men disagree !
Strange concord, without harmony !
The Church in this can take no part :
She asks the Union of the heart.
For Christian Union springs from faith, —
The power that conquers sin and death ;
And heresy and schism can find
No favor in the Church's mind.

'Tis true we are encompassed round
With evil ; true that few are found
Consistent with the holy rule
Prescribed in the Apostles' school ;

True that divisions, war, and strife
Are hostile to the Church's life.
Our lot is cast in those last days
When piety has little praise ;
When times are perilous and dark,
And men prefer to make their mark
In worldly honor, wealth, and pride,
With hopes and aims unsanctified,
As if they had no souls to save,
Nor heaven to win beyond the grave !

But is the Church to blame for this ?
Or can her system be amiss,
When all its course directly flowed
From the recorded Word of God ?
Is it for us to change His plan
To please the weak caprice of man ?
The Constitution of the State
Is sacred, and a traitor's fate
May doom the leaders of the band,
Who, to subvert it, lift their hand.
And shall the government assigned
To Christ's own Kingdom, by His mind,
Be deemed unworthy of the love
Which should our loyalty approve ?

The old Reformers cast away
The yoke of Rome's corrupted sway
In duty to the higher law
Which in the Word of God they saw ;

But all the later sects, which rose
In England, were the Church's foes.
Without excuse or valid cause,
They broke the Apostolic laws,
And chose her rule to set aside
In wilful, independent pride.

But such secession ne'er can be
Allowed with Union to agree.
The Church of Christ must still be found
To guard her Apostolic ground.
And while, for her dear Master's sake,
She tries allowance kind to make
For human error, leaving all
Before the Lord to stand or fall,
She may not use a flattering tongue
To blend the lines of right and wrong;
Nor compromise her sacred law
The praise of heretics to draw;
Nor treat schismatics as her friends;
Nor advocate a course which tends
The strife of discord to increase,
And thwart her work of love and peace.

The want of Christian Unity
Is a sore evil. All agree
That, if our labors would obtain
The ancient brotherhood again,
It would be welcomed with acclaim
By all that bear the Saviour's name.

We know our great Redeemer prayed,
The night in which He was betrayed,
That all His followers might be One,
With love the race of faith to run.
And when divisions first arose
At Corinth, every reader knows
What care the chosen Apostle took
To mark them with a sharp rebuke.
But the result seems plain and clear,
That never can the Church appear
United, save by going back
To that authoritative track,
Which, by the Holy Spirit's light,
Is made the only rule of right,
And in the Sacred Scriptures given,
To guide us in the way to heaven.

There is the only standard set.
By this each question may be met
With an authority divine
From which the Church should ne'er decline.
So far as any sect retains
The Apostolic plan, it gains
A right, with reason just, to claim
The honor of a Church's name:
So far, no farther. Since that plan,
Through grace, is God's free gift to man,
A Church complete conformed must be
In all things to His wise decree.

We hold our system as the best,
Because it well endures the test.

Church of the Bible! always read,
And thus before the people spread
From first to last, that every ear
Its pure and saving truths may hear ;
Church of the Martyrs! one in faith
With those whose grand and glorious death
Bore witness to the Saviour's power
In persecution's darkest hour ;
Church Holy, Catholic, and One!
Before division's course begun
The Arch-deceiver's fraud to prove,
And mar the unity of love :
What other union do we need
Than that in which the Apostles' Creed
Reminds us still, with grateful heart
And constant zeal, to bear our part ?

But while the system we applaud,
Because it is the work of God,
We know that no mere system can
Reform the rebel soul of man.
The Holy Spirit must be given
To change the heart with power from Heaven.
For though the Church is still the place
In which to seek the means of grace,
Yet none the benefit can find
Till Christ bestows a willing mind.
What beauty can the blinded eye,
In color, form, or light, descry ?
What charm can music use to cheer
The dulness of the deafened ear ?

Even so the Church has no control
Upon the feelings of the soul,
Until the sinner's ears and eyes
Are opened to perceive the prize.
Did not the traitor Judas stand
Amongst the Apostolic band ?
Did not the sorcerer Simon prove
His Baptism without faith or love ?
Nay, did not thousands of the Jews
The call of Christ Himself refuse,
Because their carnal hearts were still
Rebellious 'gainst His sacred will ?

By nature all are disinclined,
By nature all are deaf and blind,
Regardless of their heavenly home,
And thoughtless of the life to come.
For man is fallen through sin. To rise,
He needs the strength which grace supplies ;
And that the Lord, with loving care,
Bestows on humble faith and prayer.

Thus, then, the evidence we show,
To all who are concerned to know,
That in the Church of Christ, restored
In due accordance with His Word,
We have the holy system given
On the authority of Heaven.
To this with grateful heart we cling,
In duty to our glorious King.

If others choose a different way,
Resolved in modern paths to stray,
We may not in their error share;
Although we plead for them in prayer,
And look with sorrow, not with hate,
Upon their sad divided state.
We do not, like the Church of Rome,
Curse those who leave their proper home;
Nor, in the effort to prevail,
Confine salvation to our pale.
Judgment on men is not assigned
By Christ to any mortal mind.
"Curse not, but bless," is His command;
And on this gracious word we stand,
Trusting that He who reads the heart
Sees some true faith in every part
Of these divisions, and will make
Allowance for His mercy's sake;
That so the humble and sincere,
Who worship Him in love and fear,
Though led in many points astray
From the more pure and perfect way,
May gain His pardon for the past,
And find their souls redeemed at last.

But hope like this should ne'er be pressed
Too far upon a Christian breast:
'Tis always safer to abide
Within the rule from Heaven supplied.
Union with error cannot be
From doubt and danger wholly free.

Though all who wander from the light
 Are taught to think the wrong is right,
 And sins of ignorance may find
 Indulgence from the Saviour's mind,
 Yet those who know the better way
 Can claim no license when they stray.

'Tis true, an argument we meet,
 Which most sectarians deem complete :
 They say, that, if the faith be found
 Substantially correct and sound,
 It is enough, since all the rest
 Is nothing more than Form at best ;
 And Forms are left at large and free,
 As human judgments may agree ;
 And every Form, if Faith be right,
 Is equal in the Saviour's sight.

This sophistry in many minds
 A ready acquiescence finds ;
 And yet its weakness will appear,
 On due reflection, plain and clear.
 We grant that FORM stands far below
 The FAITH, as all true Christians know.
 It is not Form, but Faith alone,
 By which the prize of life is won.
 The victory over sin and death
 Is promised to a holy Faith ;
 And, where the heart is trained for Heaven,
 The name of Church may well be given.

But when we view the gracious plan
On which the Lord created man,
We see that, in His wise control,
He gave His image to the soul ;
While the fair body was designed
To be the servant of the mind.
The man complete must both embrace :
Both mark the nature of the race,
Both are the work of His own hand,
Both subject to His high command.
Although the soul so far excels
The goodly frame in which it dwells, —
Although the Spirit's presence gives
The power by which the body lives, —
Although, without the soul, no art
Can vigor to the flesh impart ;
Yet who the body would disdain ?
What mortal judgment would refrain
From all the kind and watchful care
Which for its safety should prepare ?
Or who refuse to praise the grace
Allotted to the form and face ?

So in the Church — the heavenly Bride
Of Christ — the rule should be applied.
Faith is the spirit, *Form* the frame :
Both from His will united came ;
And both should still united be
According to His wise decree.

But when the soul departs at death,
Gone is the body's vital breath.

No thinking head, no beating heart, —
Corruption seizes every part.
No love the pallid corpse can save :
'Tis given in sorrow to the grave !

So in the Church. When *Faith* has fled,
The *Form* is, like the body, dead.
Its life depends on Faith alone ;
When that is lost, its power is gone :
Decay asserts its dark control,
And hope forsakes the sinner's soul !

And yet another point may be
Drawn forth from this analogy ;
A clearer view of truth to gain,
And make the just conclusion plain.

The soul of man is sometimes seen
With all its powers enlarged and keen ;
While his poor body crippled lies,
Deformed and maimed, before our eyes.
Who would not give a pitying word,
And wish his frame could be restored ?

Nay, though he might possess a mind
In strength and learning more refined
Than that of half his friends, who boast
The members which his frame had lost,
Yet who his case with praise would scan,
Or say he was a perfect man ?

So in the Church. A sect may shine
 With faith that seems almost divine;
 But if its government be marred,
 Its worship with disorders scarred,
 Its sacraments passed lightly by
 As needless modes of piety,
 While new inventions take the place
 Of all the Scriptural means of grace,
 Though its triumphant course may claim
 From zealous crowds an honored name,
 Yet the fair *Form* which Christ designed
 Through the inspired Apostles' mind
 Is so disfigured, maimed, and crossed,
 That all its loveliness is lost.
 The soul of faith may still remain,
 Salvation's mercy to attain;
 But we no longer see displayed
 The body for its dwelling made.

The notion which has gone abroad,
 That Forms are nothing before God,
 Is therefore, as we deem, absurd,
 Opposed to reason and His Word.
 For when has He created aught
 Without a Form with wisdom fraught?
 And why has He, since time began,
 Given Order to the mind of man,
 Reducing all our work below
 To Form and System? Thus we know
 That government proceeds by rule;
 That every business, trade, and school, —

The halls of justice and of law,
Armies and navies, — all must draw
From *Form* their whole potential force :
By that they still direct their course.
In pleasure's joy and sorrow's pain
The rules of *Form* are seen again.
Nor is it possible to find
A social circle where the mind
Is not compelled regard to pay
To *Forms* and *Fashions* of the day.
Form in the dress, *Form* in the feast,
Form from the greatest to the least :
Nay, even the Christian sects who rave
'Gainst *Forms* which the Apostles gave,
Forced by necessity, are known
By other customs, all their own ;
And, if *their Form* is not upheld,
The bold intruder is expelled,
Without inquiring if his soul
May not be under Faith's control !

The question, therefore, would appear
To make an issue plain and clear.
Form is a thing essential still
In every act of human will.
The Church on earth could ne'er exist,
Unless it might in *Form* subsist ;
And hence the Lord Himself decreed
The *Form* for Israel's Church and Creed ;
And when the time foretold drew nigh,
To raise the Church of Christ on high,

His Spirit gave it *Form* again,
 To mark the order of His reign.
 His chosen Apostles were inspired
 To do the work which He required ;
 And no authority can shine
 With power more gracious and divine.

Shall Christian sects, without pretence
 To inspiration, set their sense
 Against the Forms established, then,
 By these, the Heaven-directed men ?

We know sectarians cannot do
 Without their Forms, which they pursue
 With zealous care. But on what ground
 Can their authority be found ?
 On none whatever, save their will.
 The faithful toil and learned skill
 With which the English Bishops sought
 The ancient Liturgies, and brought
 The Forms of Christian Prayer and Praise
 To emulate the Martyrs' days, —
 All this received no kind respect
 From any leader of a sect.
 They raised a standard strange and new
 In government and worship too ;
 As if a warrant had been given
 By the Almighty King of heaven
 To change His system for a plan
 Invented by the wit of man.

It was a sad and sore mistake
The ancient Church's Form to break!
That Church was CATHOLIC, and spread
Where'er the Gospel raised its head,
For centuries ere the pope unfurled
The flag which claims to rule the world.
Thus, in the Apostles' Creed, we find
The Church of Christ is well defined
HOLY AND CATHOLIC to be:
Such is the voice of Heaven's decree.
Not *Roman Catholic*, — a phrase
Which came long afterwards, in days
When superstition, force, and fraud
Were mingled with the truth of God.

O yes! it was a sore mistake
The ancient Church's rule to break;
For that brought in the mournful train
Of those divisions which maintain
The constant war of Christian strife,
So hostile to a holy life.
Men talk of union against Rome;
But what result from this can come,
Save the dissensions to increase
Which now oppose all hope of peace?
The spirit of the age is still
In little concord with good will.
Moved by excitement and display,
Inclined to every novel way,
In strong self-confidence arrayed,
Proud of the fancied progress made,

Feeling no reverence for the past,
What union can be formed to last ?
Have we not seen, throughout the land,
Divisions grow on every hand,
While, in the lapse of eighty years,
No case of peace restored appears ?
New sects have started by the score ;
Old sects have wrangled more and more ;
And never did the Christian mind
Seem less to Unity inclined.

This is the natural effect
Which follows from the war of sect,
Fomented doubtless by the art
Which Satan plies to sway the heart.
To *real Union* we can see
No way, till Christian men agree
To learn in the Apostles' school,
And take from that their only rule.
Of such reform, no human eye
Can any hopeful sign descry.
Our lot in those "last days" is found,
When unbelief and sin abound ;
And prophecy, in language strong,
Describes the growth of crime and wrong.
Irreverence towards the Word of God
Seems fast increasing all abroad ;
Self-will, self-interest, and self-love
Are the chief motives men approve ;
Domestic government no more
Expects obedience as of yore ;

Regard for law is rarely seen
If personal feeling stands between ;
And patriot ardor soon grows cold,
Unless kept warm by lust of gold.

Against the flood of sins and woes,
The Church united might oppose
A barrier strong ; for God would bless
His own sure plan of holiness.
And this we hope for — not in vain —
When Christ returns on earth to reign ;
But not before. Till then we bear
In all those grievous ills our share,
Thankful that we can have a place
Where every ancient means of grace,
In its own order, still may shine
With an authority divine.

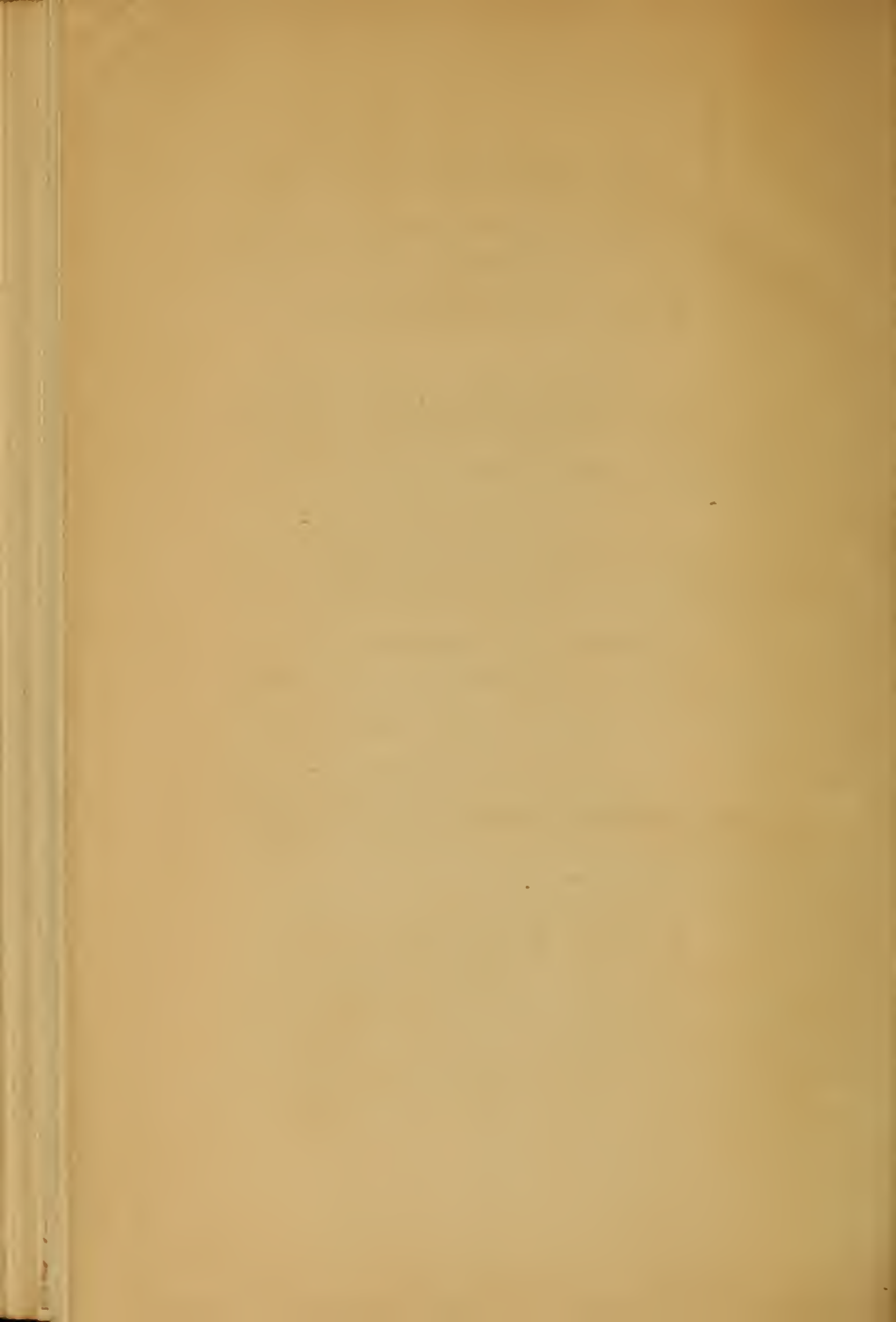
We speak of *system*, not of *men* :
It is not for a Christian's pen
To boast of any high degree
Of personal zeal or piety.
Comparisons in that respect
We would not make with any sect.
For aught we know, their prayers may rise
With more devotion to the skies,
Their hearts may be more sanctified,
Their field of charity more wide,
Their life from folly more secure,
Their mutual love more warm and pure,
Their hope more steadfast, and their fear
More reverential and sincere.

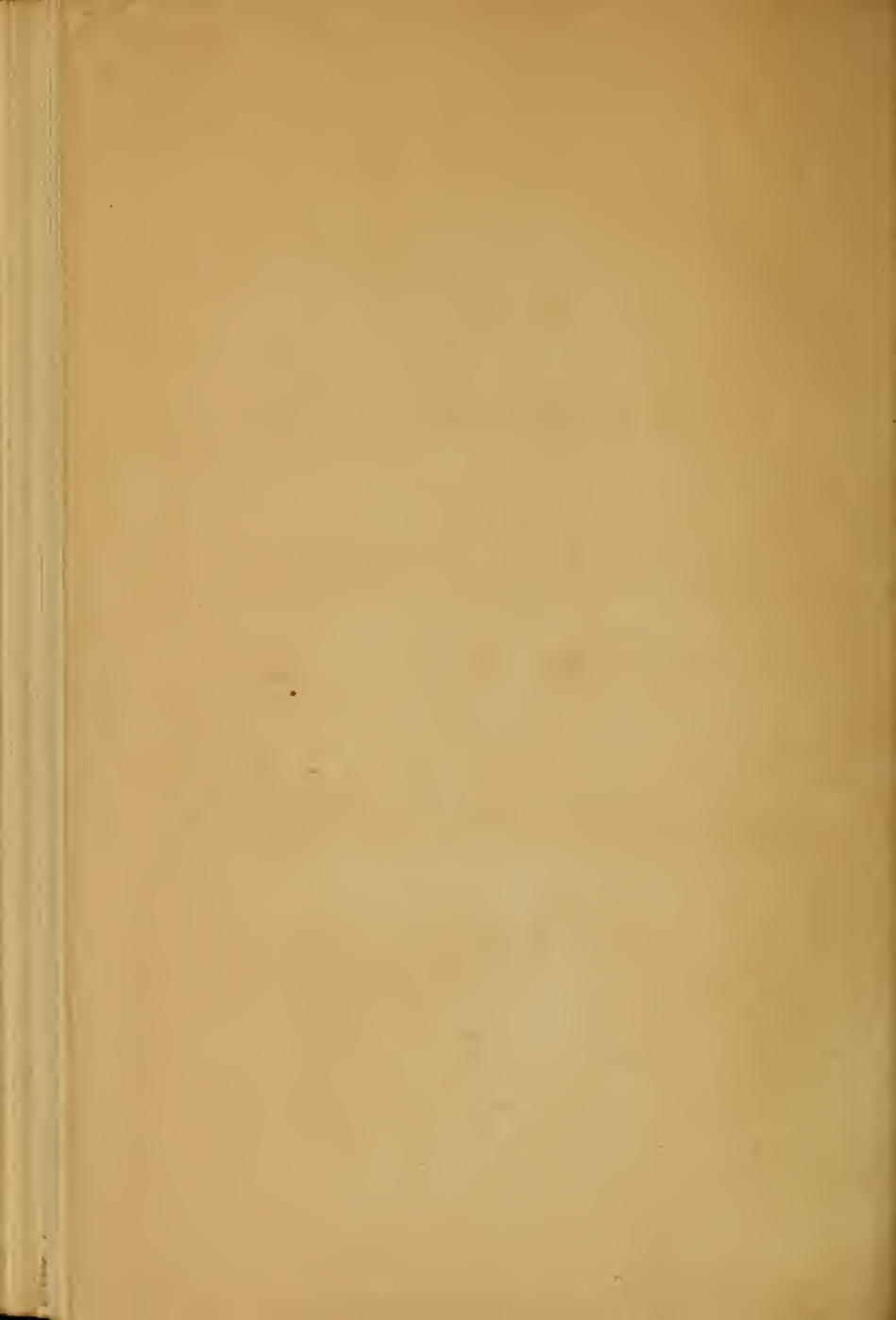
Of this we speak not. None can say,
 But God alone, who best obey
 The precepts by the Saviour given,
 To guide His servants' way to heaven.

Yet this we know : that we can see
 And honor worth, where'er it be ;
 While we confess and sorely feel
 Our own defects in Christian zeal.
 The *system* of the Church we praise,
 As nearest to the Apostles' days ;
 But for ourselves we lay no claim
 To any but the humblest name.

The Church of England, and our own,
 On that safe system stand alone :
 Yet not alone, while we are led
 In all things by our glorious Head.
 'Tis true that Popery may boast
 A far more proud and numerous host ;
 'Tis true that Eastern Christians claim
 With some a more imposing name ;
 While prosperous sects, in constant strife,
 Proclaim a wide-spread, growing life :
 But yet our place must still be found
 Upon the Apostolic ground,
 Whose worship, government, and faith
 Shall be our heritage till death,
 And guide us, through the Saviour's love,
 In mercy, to the Church above !







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